Sablan grills Castro on Torres' liquor donation. PAGE 3
Kilili: Build Back Better Act passes US House. PAGE 5

$1

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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LATEST STATS ON COMMUNITY CASES SHARED

'No severe COVID-19 yet due to our high vaccination rate'

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Since Oct. 28, 2021, there have been 183 cases of COVID-19 in the CNMI and, although majority of these cases were symptomatic, the CNMI has not had a case yet of anyone experiencing severe symptoms of the disease, according to Stephanie Kern-Allely, who is

See COVID on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:26pm, Nov. 22, 2021

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Fully Vaccinated:	84.9%
Days since last community transmission	2

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	33,190
Fully Vaccinated:	30,250
Moderna	
Initiated:	4,944
Fully Vaccinated:	4,759
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	961

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	19,069	23	19,092
Recovered	16,940	15	16,955
Active	1,851	23	1,874
Deaths	262	1	263

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	457	7	464
Traced via Travel Screening	266	0	266
Traced via Community Screening	191	7	198
Deaths	3	0	3

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

Seven more cases

» One MCS student tests positive

By JOSHUA SANTOS
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. announced Sunday that seven more individuals were confirmed positive for COVID-19 through surveillance testing on Nov. 20, bringing the CNMI's total to 464. In related news, Mount Carmel School announced yesterday that one of its students had

See SEVEN on Page 4

About $22M spent so far on quarantine sites—GAR

By JOSHUA SANTOS
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REPORTER

As of June 30, 2021, $22.1 million has already been spent on the CNMI government's operation of COVID-19 quarantine sites, with $13.4 million spent on rooms and $2.3 million spent on meals for quarantined individuals, and $6.4 million for other services.

See $22M on Page 4

JAPANESE AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, second from right, prepares for the ceremonial breaking of a sake barrel to start the Japanese Autumn Festival at the Paseo de Marianas in western Garapan Saturday night. Also in the photo, from left, are Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas president Hideaki Sawada, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), Saipan Mayor David Apatang, and Japan Consul Kazuhiko Ono. The festival, organized by the Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas, showcases the historic ties between the Marianas and Japan.

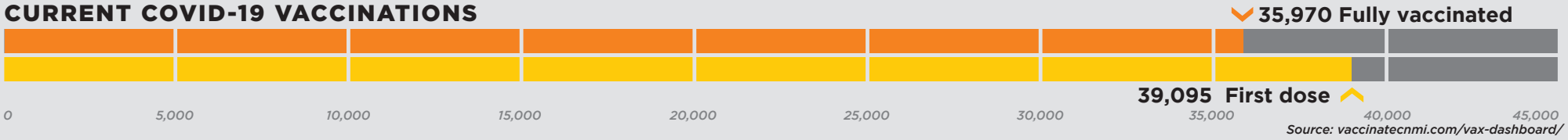
FERDIE DE LA TORRE

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

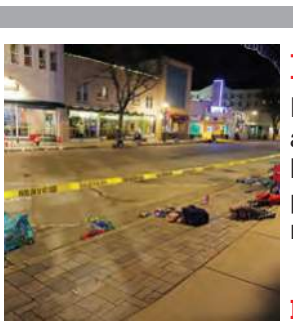
CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

BUSINESS
More than 200 foreign tourists arrive on Vietnam's largest Phu Quoc island on Saturday.
PAGE 11



NATION
Five are killed after an SUV sped through barricades and into a parade of Christmas marchers.
PAGE 12

ASIA
The Philippine military redeploys two supply boats to a disputed shoal in the South China Sea.
PAGE 13

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Local

500 Sails celebrates first anniversary of *Sunday Sails*

500 Sails celebrated last Nov. 18 its first-year anniversary since the launch of *Sunday Sails*, a free program begun by Master Navigator Mario Benito.

Sunday Sails gives the public the unique opportunity to experience sailing on a traditional canoe and even learn how to sail. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Sunday Sails* has reached over 1200 participants in 40 weeks over the past year.

Benito hopes to inspire others to take up sailing and navigation and by making it free, the barrier to learn and be a part of this cultural experience is removed. "I want to open it up to the community, because this type of knowledge is disappearing, and we have to keep trying to pass this down. I want my son and others to learn how to carve the canoe and navigate the canoe, so please come help us revive our canoe culture," said Benito.

When Benito joined 500 Sails' boatyard staff in 2020, he saw the canoes in the Guma Sakman as the means to start teaching. *Sunday Sails* is his concept and he is supported by 500 Sails staff and volunteers but, more importantly, by his extended family who sail the canoes every weekend.

Benito is a Senior Sakman Leader (boatbuilder) at 500 Sails. Born and raised on the island of Polowat in Chuuk of the Houpolowat clan and Utts Wenimai and Wenipukuw, Benito is a highly respected leader who brings over 47 years of navigational experience into the fold. Since he was 4 years old, Benito has sailed with his father, uncles (of Western renown Mau Piailug), and his grandfather, Taworhu Onopey, and trained for years with some of the most famous late Grand Master Polowat navigators, including Hipour Ewoluth (Edward), Manipey Rapang, Teo Onopey, and Rainam Edward, who performed his *Pwo* ceremony in Guahan in 2016.

Benito's understanding of the ocean is a reflection of thousands of years of oral tradition and maritime skillsets. He received his formal training from the Weriyaeng School of Navigation and informally from the Fanur School of Navigation.

Sunday Sails is free to anyone interested in experiencing traditional canoe sailing. It runs from 10am to 2pm and is accompanied by a potluck beach barbecue. No reservations are necessary—just come to the beach behind the Guma Sakman with something to share. For more information and notices related to *Sunday Sails*, visit the 500 Sails Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/500Sails. ***(PR)***

Mario Benito poses in the center with crew, Lolobeyong Benito, Marjorie Daria, Thompson Onopey, and April Repeki aboard the *Neni* canoe. M. DARIA

Christmas Village entries sought

Looking for a creative way to spread Christmas cheer? The Marianas Visitors Authority, in collaboration with PDM Promoters and Team PDI, is seeking 10 participants for its Marianas Christmas Village display to be held in conjunction with this year's annual Christmas in the Marianas signature event.

The MVA is inviting 10 participants to decorate a 10'x10' area at the Christmas in the Marianas grounds at Garapan Fishing Base on Saipan. Participants may decorate with any Marianas-inspired Christmas theme for the chance to win cash prizes.

"We are redesigning this year's Christmas Village contest for the public to showcase their creativity and Christmas spirit," said MVA managing director Priscilla M. Iakopo. "We're looking forward to the festive entries, which we expect will also be perfect for picture-taking at Christmas in the Marianas and throughout the holiday season."

Cash prizes will be awarded: $2,000 for first place, $1,500 for second place, and $1,000 for third place.

The Marianas Christmas Village will be opened on Dec. 10, 2021, in conjunction with the Christmas in the Marianas signature event, which will feature holiday entertainment, including Christmas caroling, for visitors and residents. Food and drinks will also be sold. The festival will be from 5pm to 9pm on Dec. 10-11, 2021. The Marianas Christmas Village will remain on display through the new year.

To sign up for the Marianas Christmas Village, call the MVA Community Projects Division at 664-3200/1 or email community projects@mymarianas.com. ***(MVA)***

Sablan grills Castro on Torres' liquor donation

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The House of Representatives Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee quibbled Friday over a bottle of liquor that Gov. Ralph DLG Torres had contributed to a party held at the residence of then-Guam senator William M. Castro in January 2019.

In questioning him during Friday's hearing, Castro, who is now Torres' chief of staff, testified that Torres did make a donation of a bottle of Scotch whiskey at the barbecue gathering that Castro had hosted at his house in Guam to show appreciation to Guam for donating relief items for the people of the CNMI impacted by Super Typhoon Yutu's devastation. Castro said the liquor was brought to the table where other items were also provided by his other guests.

Rep. Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan) pointed out that Castro's name appears in a number of Torres' public expenditures, including some of the justification for travel to and from Guam and reimbursement requests, including the purchase of the liquor. Sablan said that, according to the reimbursement request memo that also lists a number of expenditures, the governor justified the purchase of the Scotch valued at $189 as a gift for Castro.

"Mr. Castro did you receive this gift of Scotch from Gov. Torres?" the lawmaker asked.

"The short answer would be yes," said Castro as he read a statement explaining the circumstances behind holding the barbecue gathering to show appreciation to those in Guam who had donated relief items for the people of the CNMI impacted by Super Typhoon Yutu.

Sablan clarified if it is Castro's testimony that the event

See SABLAN on Next Page

OAG now looking into contempt charges vs Torres' executive assistant

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General is now looking into the criminal contempt citation recently levied by the House of Representatives Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee against Gov. Ralph Torres' executive assistant.

In a short statement from Chief Prosecutor Chester Hinds of the Office of the Attorney General Criminal Division, the contempt findings against Frances M. Dela Cruz is under investigation.

"In accordance with the statute 1 CMC § 1306, on Nov. 16th, the Speaker of the House, [Edmund] Villagomez, sent a letter to the Attorney General, certifying the statement of contempt and asking the AG to prosecute Frances Delacruz for contempt. Prosecutors have been assigned to the case and the matter is being investigated," he said.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the JGO committee held Dela Cruz in criminal contempt after a hearing last Tuesday when she refused to answer questions by repeatedly reading a statement citing her reasons for objecting to the subpoena issued her.

Dela Cruz was not arrested at that time. JGO chair Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) excused Dela Cruz until further notice, after which the committee members who were present unanimously voted to hold her in contempt. After the voting, Babauta wrote Villagomez to inform him of their action.

Dela Cruz appeared before the committee with her counsel, Viola Alepuyo. Gilbert Birnbrich also appeared at the hearing as counsel for the Office of the Governor.

Those who voted to hold Dela Cruz in contempt were Reps. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), Richard T. Lizama (D-Saipan), Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), and vice speaker Blas Jonathan Attao (R-Saipan).

Rep. Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan), who joined the hearing virtually, was still considered absent as she is off-island. Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) was also absent.

PCG-Agaña joins Arago family in prayers

The Philippine Consulate General Agaña in Guam joins the Philippine Honorary Consulate for the CNMI and Arago family in asking friends, colleagues, the Filipino community, and the entire CNMI community to keep praying for honorary Philippine consul Glicerio "Eli" Arago.

Arago

"Our dear honorary consul has been moved to the intensive care unit of Guam Regional Medical City on Sunday afternoon," said the Philippine Honorary Consulate-CNMI in a statement yesterday. "In this difficult moment, our prayers continue to be heard. We are truly grateful for the love and immense support his friends, colleagues and everyone in our community have shown."

Mass of special intensions are offered daily at 6am and on Sundays at 9am at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral and 6am at Kristo Rai Parish. ***(PR)***

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Admin leave for non-critical govt employees starts Wednesday

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has approved granting administrative leave to all non-critical government employees on Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021, starting at 12pm as an early start to the Thanksgiving holiday and another administrative leave the entire day of Friday, Nov. 26, 2021.

This means all CNMI government employees can take off from work at noon of Wednesday and return to work on Monday, Nov. 29, 2021.

In the directive he issued last night, Torres said he is authorizing the administrative leave in the spirit of giving thanks.

"For nearly the past two years, the ongoing global pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to our Commonwealth, our nation, and to the world. For this reason, we owe great thanks to our front-liners—our doctors, nurses, first responders, the COVID-19 Task Force, and all our government employees for demonstrating proactive leadership, commitment, self-sacrifice, and service to our people during times of uncertainty.

"We also extend our gratitude to the members of our community for your active participation and the individual roles you have played to keep your family members, friends, and neighbors safe. It is only through your cooperation and care that the CNMI has been able to remain one of the safest places in the world from COVID-19. Likewise, it is only with your help and partnership that we may continue to keep safe as we move forward alongside the rest of the world in adapting to a new normal.

"Last Thanksgiving, I asked all of you to continue to look out for one another, and you have done more than that through your mutual kindness and cooperation. I will remain forever grateful to serve you. My family, my administration, and I wish you and your loved ones many blessings, good health, and a happy and safe Thanksgiving," he said. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Water tank replacement projects begin on Saipan, Tinian

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. announced yesterday the beginning of the initial phase of three water tank replacement projects on Saipan and Tinian as part of resiliency efforts in the event of a major disaster, as well as to provide safe drinking and running water for residents.

NMHC has awarded $19.5 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery Program to CUC for these projects.

The Dandan and Kagman water tanks on Saipan will be replaced with two new pre-stressed concrete 1-million-gallon tanks, while the Tinian water tank will be replaced with a new pre-stressed concrete 0.5 MG water tank. The new Dandan water tank will be able to hold 1 million gallons of water to help improve water services and provide improved water pressure to CUC customers in the Dandan Tank Service Areas, which includes Lower Dandan, As Lito, portions of Kannat Tabla, As Perdido, and Koblerville areas.

The Dandan and Kagman water tanks will serve approximately 20,000 individuals, while the Tinian water tank will serve the entire population of Tinian.

Additionally, these new water tank replacement projects will provide a steady supply of safe water by removing the existing metal glassed fused water tanks that are prone to damage from typhoon force winds, as well as high corrosion that form the high salinity levels in the ground water. The tank replacement projects are part of the resiliency and long-term solution to ensure CUC continues to provide safe drinking water to the public, especially after a major typhoon event.

"Resiliency is our story and has been the goal of our recovery, so that we can rebuild our infrastructure and provide our people with better services even during disasters," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. "These projects will provide Saipan and Tinian residents with better water services than ever before and will ensure that clean and safe water is pumped into every home covered by these tanks. I thank CUC and NMHC, most notably [CUC] executive director [Gary] Camacho and [NMHC] corporate director [Jesse] Palacios and their staff for their hard work and dedication. This is exciting news, and I look forward to providing more updates to our community."

Camacho said that CUC is looking forward to begin the projects and will be working closely with NMHC to complete these disaster-related recovery projects "for the betterment of the community and to continue to provide safe drinking water for customers. CUC extends its appreciation to Gov. Torres and his administration for their continued support for resiliency improvements for critical infrastructure."

Palacios also thanked Torres and his administration "for prioritizing projects that are critical to our communities' resiliency and to be better prepared for disasters. CUC and NMHC have been working closely together to ensure that the intergovernmental agreement has been executed, and the environmental reviews have been completed in order to receive the official authority to use the CDBG-DR funds for this important service." ***(PR)***

Sablan has yet to choose her lieutenant governor candidate

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rep. Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan) said yesterday that the NMI Democratic Party has not chosen yet her running-mate for the gubernatorial election in November 2022.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s inquiry, Sablan, who is the NMI Democratic Party's candidate for governor, said they are still in talks and are interviewing potential candidates.

"No decision has been made yet," she said.

Sablan did not say how many potential candidates they have been talking to.

Sablan earlier stated that the Search Committee has already begun the vetting process as to who will be her running-mate. She said her running-mate will be announced later this month.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres had already announced that he is seeking re-election under the NMI Republican Party, with Sen. Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan (R-Saipan) as his running-mate.

Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Saipan Mayor David Apatang have also announced their candidacy as governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, on an independent slate.

$22M

From Page 1

The funding sources that are being used for these costs covering the period from March 2020 up to June this year are $17.5 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and $4.6 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, funding.

Patrick Guerrero, who is the governor's authorized representative, said the quarantine site contracts are all on a "room-utilized basis," and that, for bigger sites such as Kanoa Resort and the former Mariana Resort & Spa Saipan, the contracts go on 90-day increments. For the smaller-scale and temporary sites, such as Century Hotel and Capital Hotel in Garapan, the contracts are shorter—between one to two weeks.

"All these contracts are all on a room-utilized basis. We pay for whatever rooms we use and whatever meals are provided," said Guerrero. He added that these incremental renewable contracts are "common practice with federal programs" and that all these contracts include termination clauses that would allow the CNMI government to not renew contracts, with ample notice, if needed.

Guerrero noted that, with the changes to quarantine for domestic travelers effective Nov. 19, fewer rooms may be needed. Effective Nov. 19 fully vaccinated incoming travelers with proof of a fully vaccinated household will no longer need to quarantine.

"We do anticipate that we're going to need [fewer] rooms as we're going to be releasing vaccinated travelers," said Guerrero. He projected that in two to three weeks' time the primary quarantine sites will transition to just Kanoa Resort and the former Mariana Resort & Spa.

When asked what are currently active quarantine sites on Saipan, Guerrero said last week that the Kanoa Resort, the former Marianas Resort, and Pacific Islands Club Saipan sites are active.

Saipan Tribune earlier reported that Capital Hotel and Century Hotel, which are both in Garapan, were identified as temporary isolation sites.

Guerrero said last week that Century's contract is tied to Kanoa's. In the case of overflow at Kanoa, Century will be activated.

SEVEN

From Page 1

tested positive for COVID-19.

As of Nov. 21, there are now 86 active cases in the CNMI.

CHCC said Sunday that the seven new cases have since been isolated and are being actively monitored.

CHCC also reported that a total of 120 tests were conducted on Nov. 20 comprising travel and surveillance testing.

Since Oct. 28, there have been 173 new cases. Of the 173, 110 were identified through contact tracing, 52 through community-based testing, and 11 through travel testing.

With one student testing positive, MCS said in an announcement to families yesterday that it "is ready to enact its current COVID-19 response procedures to keep the school community safe" and that it will continue to provide students with the option to attend synchronous or asynchronous online classes.

MCS added that all extra-curricular activities are canceled until further notice and that the COVID-19 testing and vaccination events at the school set for Nov. 27 will continue as scheduled.

"Mount Carmel School's leadership will revisit the school's current response procedures to better serve the school's community," said MCS.

COVID

From Page 1

a regional communicable disease epidemiologist for the Pacific Island Health Officers Association.

In a virtual news briefing yesterday that was also attended by Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer Esther L. Muña, Kern-Allely credits the absence of severe COVID-19 in the CNMI thus far to the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines and the CNMI's high vaccination rate.

Kern-Allely presented the latest data on the CNMI's most recent cases of COVID-19, including the sex, ages, and vaccination statuses of the cases, and how these cases were identified.

It was learned that, as of Nov. 21, there are 97 active cases in the CNMI and one active hospitalization. In total, the CNMI has had 474 cases.

Of the 183 cases since Oct. 28, it was learned that 77 were female and 106 were male.

As to how these 183 cases were identified, Kern-Allely reported that 119 were found through contact tracing, 32 through community-based testing, 21 through COVID-19 testing at the hospital, and 11 through travel testing.

By age, 13 cases were aged 4 years or younger; 53 cases were aged 5 to 19 years old; 81 were aged 20 to 49; 30 were aged 50 to 64; and six were aged 65 and older.

By vaccination status, 108 individuals or 59% were fully vaccinated, 35 individuals or 19% were unvaccinated, 31 individuals or 17% were ineligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, and nine individuals or 5% were partially vaccinated.

Kern-Allely noted that some individuals in the "ineligible" category are children aged 5 to 11 who were unable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at the time they were identified as positive. As of Oct. 29, COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 5 to 11 have been approved.

Kern-Allely added that some children aged 5 to 11 are also included in the "partially vaccinated" category. These children have already gotten their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine but may have had the virus transmitted to them before their bodies developed immunity.

Kern-Allely said that the high proportion of fully vaccinated individuals testing positive is primarily due to, numbers-wise, the fact that the CNMI has quite a high vaccination rate. Kern-Allely said that breakthrough cases are expected.

As for contact tracing efforts, Kern-Allely reported that a vast majority of the cases since Oct. 28 have been linked to at least one other case and that there are one to two unlinked cases for now.

Kern-Allely later in the briefing clarified that these unlinked cases are being investigated by the contact tracing team and that the known linkages of new cases to previous cases are being constantly updated.

"There may be times where we do not identify a link and that may be due to resolution of infection or a number of other reasons. The only way to get the virus is from another person, so we know there must've been transmission somehow," she said.

Kern-Allely also reported the types of exposure from one case to another as of Oct. 28. Of the 177, 109 cases were exposed to COVID-19 through household transmission; 38 cases through workplaces; 12 through schools; 11 through travel; and seven through community-based transmission.

SABLAN

From Page 3

was not an official function. Castro said the event was not done in his capacity as then-senator. "But I will submit that the governor (Torres) made a public appearance on behalf of a grateful community in his official capacity as governor," he said.

Castro said that on that evening when Torres arrived at the appreciation party, he did not say that this Scotch whisky was a gift from him. He said Torres just basically showed up and made a contribution to the event.

The JGO Committee, which is controlled by the Democrat representatives, is investigating Torres' expenditures of public funds and travels.

Kilili: Build Back Better Act passes US House

» **If OK'd, bill will transform Marianas healthcare, education**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Coming on top of over $2 billion in federal aid to the Marianas in the last three years, the Build Back Better Act, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday, would continue to transform the lives of individuals and families in the islands for years to come, said Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP).

"H.R. 5376 increases base funding for Medicaid to $70 million, more than ever before, and permanently lowers the local match to a rate below any state," Sablan said. "The House-passed Build Back Better Act extends the child tax credit that has already provided $28.7 million this year to Marianas families. And Build Back Better funds prekindergarten education here in the Marianas and child care for our working parents."

Sablan's College Access Act, which provides in-state tuition nationwide for Marianas students, his Employment Services and Job Parity Act, making Wagner-Peyser job training and placement funds available, and his Job Corps Nationwide Act, allowing for a Job Corps center in the Marianas are all part of the larger legislation.

The Build Back Better Act also has $1 billion for the Marianas, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to invest in critical infrastructure. "With over $100 million in capital improvement funds for the Marianas in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which the President signed on Monday, and our share of the $1 billion in this bill, we can reach longstanding goals like improving the [Commonwealth] Health Center on Saipan and building clinics on Tinian and Rota, modernizing and fortifying our power systems, and getting drinkable tap water to every home 24/7," Sablan said.

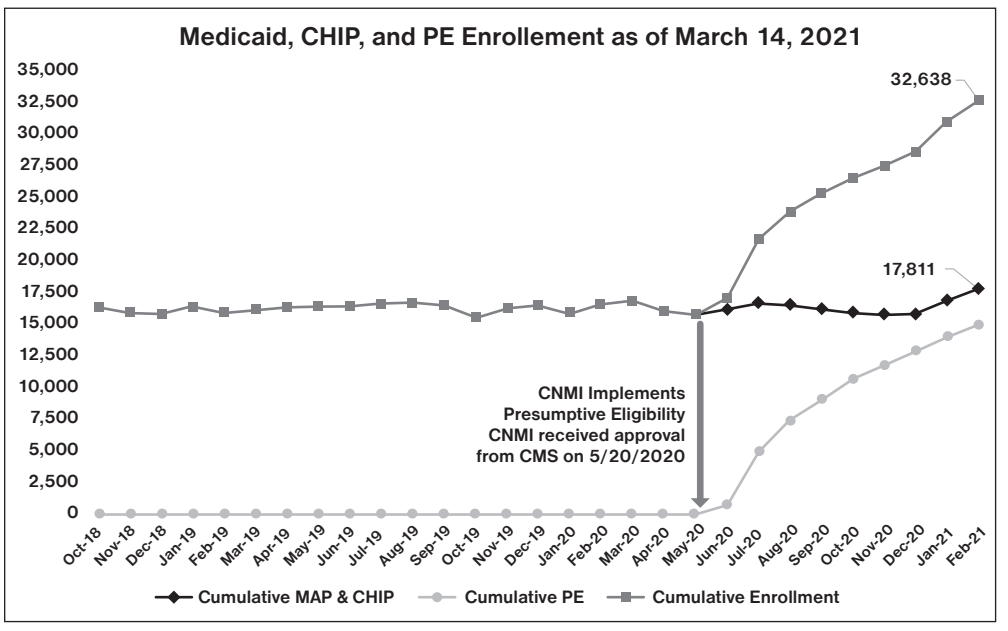
All Republicans voted against the Build Back Better Act.

$70M for Medicaid, 17% local match

Congress raised Marianas Medicaid funding to $60 million two years ago in U.S. Public Law 116-94; and with the automatic inflation adjustment, funding for this year was set at $64 million. But Section 30731 of the Build Back Better Act raises that even more, to $70 million in fiscal 2022. And every year after, that amount should increase.

The Build Back Better Act also makes permanent the current 83% federal/17% local shares for Medicaid, a ratio better than for any state in the nation. And it allows the Marianas to reduce its local share another 6% by establishing a Home and Community Based Service program to bring care to older adults and people with disabilities. The extra funding for this new program in the Marianas would be in addition to the $70 million base.

Funding for CHIP, the Children's' Health Insurance Program, is made permanent in the BBBA. Together, Medicaid, CHIP and application of presumptive eligibility have doubled federal healthcare coverage in the Marianas to over 32,000 people in recent years. Presumptive eligibility allows Head Start providers, schools, and other community organizations to screen for eligibility and immediately enroll children who appear to meet the criteria to receive care.



With significant new federal funding from Congress, the Marianas has increased enrollment to 32,638, 63% of the population, according to data submitted to the House Energy and Commerce Committee by the Marianas Medicaid program for a hearing this March.

Seniors and others who are insured through Medicare would be eligible for hearing aids, a new program benefit. Over 2,000 individuals in the Marianas are enrolled in Medicare. For those who also participate in the Medicare Part D drug program, out-of-pocket costs are capped at $2,000. Over 300 individuals in the Marianas are enrolled in Medicare Part D.

Child tax credit extended

Families in the Marianas have already received $28,726,000 from the advanced child tax credit that was part of the American Rescue Plan that Congress passed in March. And families will continue to receive those up-front payments through 2022, once the Build Back Better Act becomes law.

The child tax credit was raised from $2,000 to $3,000 per child and $3,600 for children under age 6 in the American Rescue Plan. The credit is refundable, so even if it is more than what a family owes in taxes, they still receive the full amount. And refundability is made permanent in the Build Back Better Act.

When the American Rescue Plan increased the Child tax credit, Sablan made sure the costs would be covered by the U.S. Treasury, not by the Commonwealth government. He also included a $300,000 administrative grant to pay the Commonwealth for the extra work of making regular advance payments. Section 137102 of the Build Back Better Act continues this funding cover-over to the Commonwealth and the advance payment administrative grant.

Child care and universal preschool

Parents and children will also benefit from the $1 billion the Marianas will share with Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide high-quality, free, pre-kindergarten programs for young learners. Licensed child care providers, Head Start, or the CNMI Public School System could all participate in the mixed delivery model Section 23002 of the Build Back Better Act proposes.

From his first days in Congress, Sablan has always said that education is the key to success for the individual and for the Marianas community. Now, as chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, he has been able to further that goal with establishment of a pre-K program nationwide.

Section 23001 of the Build Back Better Act also provides $500 million for the Marianas and the three smaller territories to implement a new child care program for children from birth to age 5. The money would allow better pay for child care workers. And low and middle-income families would pay no more than 7% of their income for high quality care. Parents would also benefit from a new paid family leave policy, providing four weeks of paid leave in the case of birth or illness.

Lastly, the White House estimates, 10,800 Marianas students, who receive free lunches in school, will qualify for a supplemental summer feeding program of $65 per month.

In-state tuition for Marianas college students

Bachelor's degree students from the Marianas would be eligible for up to $15,000 per year to make up the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition at public colleges nationwide under the terms of Sablan's College Access Act, included as Section 20027 of the Build Back Better Act. In addition, Section 20021 increases the annual Pell grant for low-income students to $7,045 per year—a $550 increase. There are 1,032 students in the Marianas who rely on Pell, the White House estimates.

"Since first introducing the College Access Act in 2011, I have never forgotten the barriers to higher education that Marianas college students face. Even though Northern Marianas College has added bachelor's degree programs in education and business, there remain so many fields of study that require going off-island," Sablan said. "The costs of travel and living away from home are still there, but at least with passage of the College Access Act we can cut the cost of tuition and open the door to more educational opportunities for our students."

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS
P.O. Box 500830, Saipan, MP 96950

NOTICE TO ADJACENT LANDOWNERS SURROUNDING THE PROPOSED KOBLERVILLE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION PROJECT

APPLICANT: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS
PROJECT: KOBLERVILLE HOMESTEAD SUBDIVISION
CRM PERMIT FILE NO.: SMS-2001-X-213-A1 (AMENDMENT)

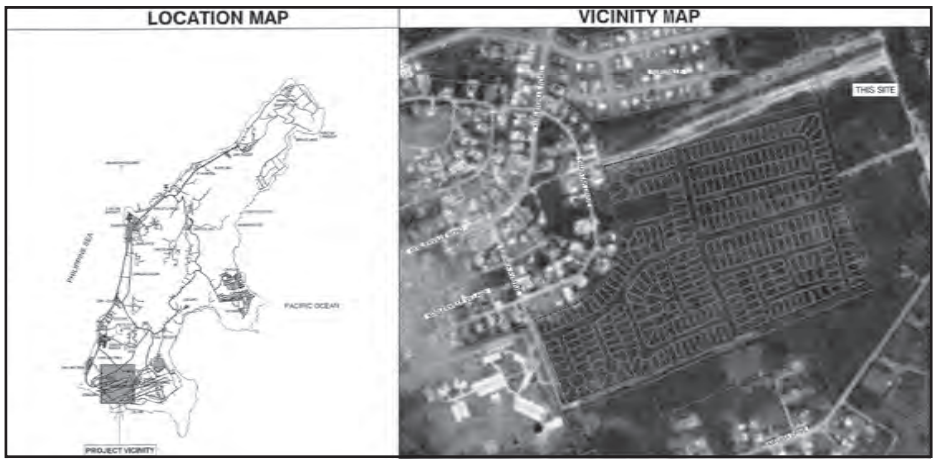
The Department of Public Lands has submitted an application to the Division of Coastal Resources Management for an amendment to Major Siting Permit SMS-2001-X-213 issued for the Koblerville Homestead Subdivision project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
The major siting permit issued for the Koblerville Homestead calls for the subdivision of 228 homestead lots, installation of water, power, and sewerline, stormwater ponding basin, access road, and sidewalks. The amendment application is to increase the total number of homestead lots to 330 within the same project footprint by decreasing the homestead lots in size. The increase of lots from 228 to 330 will increase the infrastructural needs of the project.

This notice is being issued to comply with NMIAC § 15-10-206(e)(2)(i) "Alternative Adjacent Property Owner Notification".

Written comments can be submitted by mail to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, P.O. Box 501304, or emailed to permitting@dcrm.gov.mp.

Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300 if you have any questions or would like more information for the Koblerville Homestead project.



Online cannabis hub, RealGoodys, aims for seamless purchases

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

RealGoodys partners Valentina Rivera and Daniel Miller sit for an interview with *Saipan Tribune* last Friday in Garapan.

JOSHUA SANTOS

The idea is to create a website that will showcase the CNMI's growing cannabis industry and the CNMI's strains and allows visitors to place online cannabis order reservations at CNMI dispensaries before even setting foot on the island—with their orders already waiting for pick up as soon as they get here.

That's a need that realgoodys.com partners Daniel Miller and Valentina Rivera believe will be met by their website, which is now taking order reservations for products from CanaMarianas, Saipan Select, and The Health Co.

Rivera pointed out that popular online cannabis information hubs on the internet, such as leafly.com and weedmaps.com, are "so national" that the CNMI's cannabis offerings are hard to find or nowhere to be found on the websites. As such, RealGoodys was created.

"Lightbulbs were [going off] in my head, 'Wait, we can create something like [Leafly and Weedmaps] for Saipan and maybe Guam,' something local-based for local dispensaries. ...Our main goal was [that] we wanted people to know where to go and not waste time going to so many places," said Rivera during an interview with Miller last Friday.

Miller, who is originally from Oregon, is a part-owner in CNMI cannabis retailer Saipan Select and had been growing cannabis stateside for the last 20 years. Miller has experience in the indoor and outdoor growing of hemp, CBD (cannabidiol) plants, and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) plants. Miller said Friday that his fellow Saipan Select co-owners flew him out to Saipan in December last year to aid in operations, and since then has been Saipan Select's main farmer.

Rivera said she originally was not familiar with the inner workings of the cannabis industry as her areas of expertise were in technology, website development, and video production.

Miller and Rivera got in touch sometime in February this year, and through months of back-and-forth with Miller, Rivera, and Saipan Select, realgoodys.com was launched. Miller clarified in a text last week that RealGoodys is independent of Saipan Select.

On Leafly, a main feature of the website is further information on cannabis strains, such as flavor profile, sensations, and THC percentages. For RealGoodys, Miller said that flavor profiles and sensations are information uploaded to the website by the dispensaries themselves. As for percentages, Miller noted that this is a challenge as there is no testing lab for cannabis products in the CNMI yet.

Some notable features of RealGoodys, Rivera said, is that the CNMI's dispensaries can put up what cannabis strains they have in stock and daily store deals in real-time, with the daily deals going to an aggregated section of the website so that visitors know right away what deals are ongoing in CNMI dispensaries.

When asked how online cannabis order reservations will work, Rivera said that website visitors select the strains they want and the amount desired. Then dispensaries are notified of the reservation request and prepare the product. Finally, customers drive to the dispensary they purchased from and pay for their order there. For website upkeep and sustainability, Rivera added that there will roughly be a 7.5% transaction fee on online order reservations, a standard practice for online retailers such as Amazon and eBay.

Rivera added that, when developing realgoodys.com she implemented a review section to allow people with verified purchases to leave feedback on strains and other products purchased and a live chat for site visitors to inquire with dispensaries in real-time before making purchases.

Another significant feature on RealGoodys is that the website is not only an online a cannabis retailer platform, but a wholesaler platform as well. For licensed sellers, RealGoodys allows cannabis farmers to upload bulk product listings to RealGoodys, and retailers can place seamless orders through the website. Product review and live chat features will be available to farmers and retailers and will further streamline that sales process, Rivera said.

As of last Friday, Miller and Rivera said that they have already met with two cannabis farmers to discuss having their products put on RealGoodys, and projected that bulk listings for cannabis retailers will be up sometime this week.

Will debit and credit card payments and/or cannabis order deliveries be on RealGoodys?

Miller and Rivera said they hope so, but said that for now, discussions are ongoing. Miller said that having debit and credit card payments at dispensaries is still a challenge as Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.-backed banks remain hesitant to do business with dispensaries as cannabis is still classified as a Schedule 1 drug—the highest level restriction by the U.S. federal government. For cannabis order deliveries, Rivera said this requires further discussion by the CNMI Cannabis Commission.

When asked about some future plans for RealGoodys, Miller and Rivera said there might be educational videos on cannabis produced in-house that will be part of the website, and that the development of a RealGoodys app is in the works as well.

When asked why they went with the brand name "RealGoodys" and why its logo is a balloon, Rivera said she and Miller were bouncing names and logo ideas off each other and landed on a balloon for a logo and "RealGoodys" as a brand name.

"This [a balloon] would be a perfect logo because it's not so 'in your face' like [Weedmaps]. But then balloons going high, it's going up to the clouds, like Cloud Nine, right?" said Rivera. "Then it's 'Real' because it's the real deal, and [cannabis product packaging] look like goodie bags..so RealGoodys."

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-22-006

Fiber Optic Internet Connectivity for CUC's Communications & Data Storage Network

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced firms for the installation of a Fiber Optic Internet Connectivity for CUC's Communications & Data Storage Network in CUC Saipan, CUC Tinian and CUC Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-RFP-22-006: Fiber Optic Internet Connectivity for CUC's Communications & Data Storage Network"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 a.m. on November 26, 2021**. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on November 18, 2021** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email, manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Patrick Reyes, CUC IT Analyst at patrick.reyes@cucgov.org and to Marcela Tenorio, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Robert Tenorio Torres
Attorney at Law
Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya)
P.O. Box 503758, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 234-7859 | Fax. (670) 234-5749
Attorney for Petitioner Merced M. Tomokane for Claimant Bank of Guam

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: JOSEPH ULLOA ROSARIO, aka: "Poping" or "Big Joe" Decedent.

Civil Action No. 20-0171 (R)
ORDER SETTING MATTER FOR HEARING ON PETITIONER'S AMENDED PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION PURSUANT TO NMI R. CIV. P. 6(b)(1)(A)
Next Court Date: December 2, 2021
Tim: 10 am
Judge: Camacho

This matter for hearing on September 30, 2021 at 10 am. Robert T. Torres appeared for petitioner. Counsel informed that the Bank has been trying to locate Decedent's heirs without much success. The Bank requested additional time to make contact with Decedent's heirs who may be a son living on Rota or other family members.

Upon consideration of Petitioner Merced M. Tomokane's ("Petitioner") request to Continue Hearing Date the mater is hereby continued to December 2, 2021 at 10 am. Petitioner shall republish an Amended Notice of Hearing on the new hearing date. On the next hearing the date the Court will consider proceeding forward on review of the Bank's efforts to give notice and publish notice.

Further, in order to make reasonable efforts to locate and inform any of Decedent's heirs, the Bank shall cause the following notice in addition to the publication in the newspapers:

A. Posting of the Notice of Hearing at the Rota Courthouse as well as the Rota Post Office (if permitted) and the Rota Mayor's Office.

B. Announcement on Rota "Channel 5" Television Station.

SO ORDERED this ____ day of September, 2021

JOSEPH N. CAMACHO
Associate Judge

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

JEAN DOMINE DUMAOANG Petitioner, Vs. ELMER DOMINE CABUS Respondent,

FCD-DI
CIVIL ACTION NO. 21-0280

SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION

TO ELMER DOMINE CABUS:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is PMB 984 P.O. Box 10,000, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at P.O. Box 500307 Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or Mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file and answer in accordance with this summons, judgement by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 8th day of July, 2021.

/S/ Clerk of Court

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

DCRM closed today

The Bureau of Environmental & Coastal Quality would like to inform the public that the Division of Coastal Resources Management will be closed today, Nov. 23, for a professional development workshop. As such, payments can be made at the CNMI Treasury Office. Regular office hours will resume on Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021. ***(PR)***

Guam PTAC sets webinar

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering a free live webinar called "Responding to Requests for Proposals" on Wednesday Nov. 24, 2021, from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. The Guam PTAC will walk participants through the common sections and clauses of an RFP as well as provide tips on developing a proposal in response to an RFP.

Links to the live webinar and the webinar evaluation will be emailed to all registered attendees 15 minutes before the start of the webinar. To register visit www.guamptac.com. ***(PR)***

New book looks at CNMI's political and economic issues

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The latest book of former CNMI Supreme Court chief justice Jose S. Dela Cruz takes a look at the CNMI's pressing political and economic issues through the prism of the CNMI's history, from before World War II to after the war and the CNMI's eventual decision to join the American political family.

Dela Cruz hopes his latest book, *The Fundamental Issues Affecting the Northern Mariana Islands*, will provoke discussions among the CNMI's leadership enough to stir them into action.

"I hope to stir discussions [with my book] to try to see and hopefully have our leaders look into these issues so that we can rectify this and start thinking about other possible industries that are a good fit for the Commonwealth," he said last Saturday during his book's launch at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library.

About 10 years ago, Dela Cruz wrote the book *From Colonialism to Self-Government: The Northern Marianas Experience*, based on his personal knowledge and experiences of living in the CNMI pre-and post-World War II and the CNMI's journey to negotiating self-governance with the United States. Dela Cruz said his latest book is a continuation of that book.

Dela Cruz pointed out that the CNMI, though small in population and landmass, is one of the U.S.' more notable territories, as the CNMI "freely negotiated its membership in the American political family" through the Covenant agreement.

From left, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez, Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Rep. Joseph A. Flores (Ind-Saipan), Jose S. Dela Cruz, Sen. Vinnie F. Sablan (R-Saipan), and Joeten-Kiyu Public Library director Erlinda C. Naputi share a photo during the launch of Dela Cruz's new book last Saturday at the library.
JOSHUA SANTOS

Former CNMI Supreme Court chief justice Jose S. Dela Cruz delivers remarks during his book launch and signing at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Saturday.
JOSHUA SANTOS

"We are the only entity, other than the states, that negotiated the terms of our membership in the American political family, and we did this through the terms negotiated and mutually agreed upon by the United States and the people of the Northern Marianas in the [Covenant] agreement. Other [U.S.] territories and commonwealths were acquired either by conquest, by purchase, or through annexation by the [U.S.] Congress. The other territories had no political status agreement with the United States, [and] as such all the other territories and Commonwealth are subject to the…powers of…Congress," said Dela Cruz.

His book also touches on some of the CNMI's pressing political and economic issues, from the garment industry to immigration to the casino and other issues. He added that, by discussing these issues at length in his book, he hopes to motivate the CNMI leadership to make the necessary changes.

"I hope to stir discussions [with my book] to try to see and hopefully have our leaders look into these issues so that we can rectify this and start thinking about other possible industries that are a good fit for the Commonwealth," he said. Dela Cruz also noted the severe impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the CNMI's sole industry, tourism.

Dela Cruz also spoke of the importance of access to education in how it is key to creating an educated citizenry. "…Any educated citizenry is not only good for the community but is necessary as well. Through education, community members would become literate and acquire the knowledge they need to improve their lives," he said. "Obtaining an education…also brings progress and makes the community productive, and providing an education has since been an essential public service by the government. It's just as important as public health,... public safety, public works, and the social programs that the government provides. Obtaining an education gives people the ability to be independent and to stand on their own two feet…"

Guests at the book launch included Lt. Gov. Arnold. I. Palacios, House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan), Rep. Joseph A. Flores (Ind-Saipan), Sen. Vinnie F. Sablan (R-Saipan), and associate judge Kenneth L. Govendo.

Dela Cruz later signed copies of his book.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) is considering a request for Federal assistance from 500 Sails to construct a Cultural Maritime Training Center in Lower Base, Saipan. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), EDA is conducting an assessment of the potential of the proposed project to affect the environment and/or historic properties.

The Cultural Maritime Training Center construction project is located in Lower Base, Saipan, specifically, Lot No. 252 E 01, adjacent the Department of Public Lands & Natural Resources Bldg. Project information is available for review at the 500 Sails office or by contacting Tel. No. (670) 323-7245.

If you have any information regarding potential impacts on environmental resources or historic properties associated with this project, please provide it in writing to:

Rowena Defato
EDA Regional Environmental Officer
rdefato@eda.gov or call 206-220-7703

Comments must be received by the EDA Regional Environmental Officer by 5:00 p.m., December 8, 2021.

Help out sea turtles during your holiday celebration on the beach

The beach is an important place for sea turtles and for us. Remember sea turtles are protected, help them survive this holiday season.

- Trash and other items left on the beach can get in the way of nesting females or hatchling turtles going to sea. Pick up your trash before leaving the beach
- We all benefit from clean beaches! As an extra gift to the environment, sea turtles and others—host a beach clean-up. Even fun with a few folks helps!
- Avoid driving on the beach as this can crush sea turtle nests and cause erosion.
- Use the red light setting on flashlights and avoid using fireworks on the beach. Lights and sounds scare away nesting turtles and disorient newborn turtles.

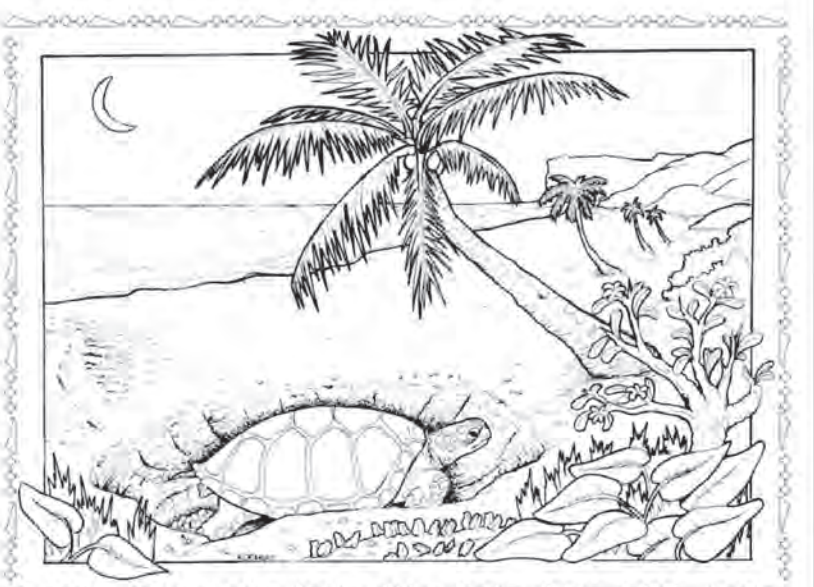


Illustration by Neill Catangay
(http://www.neillfcatangay.com/)

Happy Holidays
from the CNMI Sea Turtle Program

Call 670- 287-8537 to report nesting activity, sea turtle emergencies, or potential illegal activity
Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to learn more about the CNMI Sea Turtle Program

NOAA FISHERIES

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Child tax credit is an investment in the nation's future

Children are good.

They may be sticky, loud and misbehaved. But that doesn't make children, in themselves, any less good. It just makes them children—the adorable, needy, frustrating, chaotic and absolutely irreplaceable building blocks of society, and of human civilization itself.

But children are also costly. It's not just about money, though money's certainly part of it. Even if you shop for discount groceries and secondhand clothes and used books and so on, it adds up. Health care. Education. And car seats, oh, the car seats.

Children are also costly in terms of time, energy and focus. It can be hard for parents to find time for their own passions, and to maintain their shared relationship, which is the beating heart of the home. And even the kindest and most compliant children occupy a great deal of their parents' worry and attention—and sometimes drive them simply batty.

It goes without saying that the joy of children—their own guileless glee and what they inspire in others—far outweighs all these costs. But more importantly from a public policy perspective, they are absolutely essential to the continuation of our society, economy and culture.

That is why families needed and deserved the federal child tax credit while the COVID-19 crisis was at its worst, and also why the program should be made permanent.

Since July, families have been receiving $300 a month for every child up to 5 years old, and $250 for kids 6 to 17. The credit is available to all families regardless of employment, but begins to phase out at certain high levels of income. The pending Build Back Better bill would extend this arrangement through 2022; a separate bill introduced by Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) would make it permanent.

Distributing the credit monthly has turned it into a kind of child allowance that has transformed many families' monthly budgets. While economists are deeply divided on the full magnitude of the impact, it's clear that there are fewer families in dire straits than this time last year. But even for middle class families, the credit has given some breathing room—a respite from creeping precarity.

While this kind of monthly payment to families is new in the United States, it's hardly a novelty around the world.

According to UNICEF, 108 nations pay their families a monthly allowance to help them with child rearing. And some more aggressive pro-natalist policies, like Hungary's, have shown modest success at reversing long-term declines in birth rates.

Finally, while there is evidence that some parents are dropping out of the workforce due to the windfall, if they're using their freedom to spend more time with their children, that's a positive effect of the policy, not a negative one. Not all socially valuable work is compensated by the market.

We invest in the future all the time in the form science, technology, the environment, and so on. In the child tax credit, we invest in the actual human beings who will make all those other investments worthwhile.

©2021 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Uh,Oh... the USA is suffering from soaring inflation and supply breakdowns!
and the Covid-19 cases are coming back strong!
Santa... Biden put a vaccine mandate on the USA! You haven't had a vaccine!
I'm not from the USA so I have the freedom to choose to have one or not! Just take the White House off our map!
Santa's map
Workshop
©2021 JIM MEDICE KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, INC.

Too many of our pregnant patients refuse the COVID vaccine

By ALYSSA STEPHENSON-FAMY and LINDA ECKERT
LOS ANGELES TIMES

In our high-risk pregnancy clinics there are three vaccine conversations that we have with patients regularly.

First, there are patients who are vaccinated for COVID-19 and counting down the days until they can schedule a booster shot. Then there are patients who will accept vaccines for influenza and Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis), but not COVID-19.

The third conversation is with expectant mothers who not only decline a COVID-19 vaccination but also other vaccines recommended in pregnancy.

We have that third conversation at least once a day with patients, and we have run out of talking points. We tell these women that if they catch COVID-19, they will be 15 times more likely to die, 14 times more likely to be intubated, and many more times likely to have a preterm birth than those who are uninfected or who have been vaccinated.

No matter what we say, these patients fear that the COVID vaccine will harm them or their babies, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. They repeatedly turn down the chance to protect themselves and their babies from the coronavirus.

Our patients are not alone in their hesitancy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention only 35.3% of pregnant women in the United States were vaccinated for COVID-19 as of Nov. 6. The numbers are even lower among pregnant Black women (20.6%) and Latina women (31.5%).

More than 24,700 pregnant women in the United States have been hospitalized with COVID-19. As of Nov. 8, 227 have died from COVID nationwide. The deadliest month for pregnant women during the pandemic was not in 2020, before vaccines were available, but this past August, during the Delta variant surge.

These numbers do not sway our pregnant patients to comply with our recommendation for vaccination.

When vaccines first were approved our patients' fears were understandable. Because pregnant women were excluded from early COVID-19 vaccine trials, we OB-GYNs had little data to reassure them that they and their babies would be safe when vaccines first became available.

Once compelling data arrived showing that COVID-19 vaccines are safe for pregnant individuals and confer protection to newborns, many expectant mothers and women planning to get pregnant had already made up their minds that the vaccines were dangerous, and it was too late to convince them otherwise.

We cannot take our vaccine-hesitant patients on a tour of the ICU, giving them a chance to experience the trepidation we feel every time we put on specialized protective equipment just to enter the room of a pregnant patient sick with COVID.

There is no way to express to them the exhaustion and the anguish of trying to find COVID-positive pregnant patients a hospital bed and a nurse to provide care when calls from community hospitals come in with a patient they need to transfer.

There is no way to convey the sense of relief our entire team feels when we successfully discharge a mother who has survived COVID and myriad other complications—though that feeling is inexorably bound to the frustration of knowing that a vaccination could've prevented her admission altogether.

Hospital providers and staff are traumatized, overtaxed and in short supply. We know that when a pregnant mother arrives in the hospital with COVID, it may be only a matter of hours before she deteriorates and needs an emergency cesarean section.

During this surgery, at least a dozen people—including the surgical team, neonatal-care specialists and anesthesiologists—arrive in an operating room empty of the typical equipment to avoid contaminating surgical supplies beyond the ones needed for this procedure with the virus. We leave our ID badges and pagers outside. We put on N-95 masks and positive air-purifying respirators hoods.

It is difficult to talk, breathe or hear each other. A team clears the elevators and hallways to transfer the patient to the operating room, where we wait. When the transfer team leaves, they literally seal the doors shut, with us inside.

For more than 18 months we've done this again and again.

One additional challenge for our fragile health care system is that we are also in a baby boom: Our hospital in Seattle had record child deliveries this summer. The contrast between our healthy, normal deliveries and our dire COVID deliveries, happening simultaneously, is almost too much to reconcile.

But until pregnant women are vaccinated against COVID, we will need to do it all over again tomorrow.

Alyssa Stephenson-Famy is an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, specializing in high-risk pregnancies, at the University of Washington School of Medicine. Linda Eckert is a professor of obstetrics and gynecology, specializing in infectious diseases and immunization, also at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

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Black Friday bargain hunters, prepare to be disappointed

By ANDREA FELSTED
Bloomberg Opinion

Andrea Felsted is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering the consumer and retail industries. She previously worked at the* Financial Times.

The bargain bonanza that is Black Friday has begun. Only there are fewer special offers this year, and those that are being advertised aren't quite so eye-catching. You can blame the global supply chain meltdown for the dearth of doorbusters.

Even when toys and TVs start flowing through trade arteries again, retailers should maintain a more disciplined approach to discounting. This won't be easy, but stores stand to gain a lot if they bin the bargains in Black Fridays to come.

This year, many Americans are still flush with lockdown savings, while wage gains are also boosting household spending power. Combine that with missing out on holiday festivities in 2020, and that's made for buoyant consumer conditions—call it revenge Christmas if you like.

Given the higher costs that retailers are facing, from spiraling freight rates to air-shipping goods from Asia, they had little choice but to cut down on promotions this year in order to protect profit margins. In any case, why risk running out of stock when you don't even need to stimulate demand? Walmart Inc. pointed to lower markdowns during the crucial back-to-school and Halloween seasons. Victoria's Secret & Co., T.J. Maxx owner TJX Cos Inc. and Macy's Inc. also had to clear less stock. Adidas AG said it was selling more sneakers at full price this year compared with in 2020.

Meanwhile, retailers such as Target Corp. and Amazon.com Inc. started their offers in October to capitalize on early consumer demand and having enough supply. That may have contributed to U.S. retail sales rising by the most in seven months in October. But that early holiday spending may take some heat out of the traditional late November frenzy.

Stacey Widlitz of SW Retail Advisors, who tracks promotions on both sides of the Atlantic, says that across the U.S., deals are similar to or lower than in 2020, when they had already been reined in due to COVID. There are some categories where special offers are heating up—such as beauty and toys—but some items are already in short supply.

In the e-commerce market, meanwhile, Adobe found that discounts were weaker in electronics, sporting goods and electrical appliances. They were similar in TVs and furniture, while prices were actually rising in DIY products, compared with reductions last year.

Even though signs suggest supply-chain problems have peaked, the scars of stock shortages along with rising inflation mean consumers now expect to pay more for what they want. This creates an opportunity for retailers to reset their profitability, by keeping bargains at 2021 levels, or even lower, in future years.

There are challenges to this strategy. For starters, the pent-up demand that characterized 2021 is likely to fade. Splashing out on everything from new cushions to coats, as well as meals out and travel, is taking its toll on those accumulated pandemic savings. The proportion of Americans who plan to travel over the Thanksgiving holiday has more than doubled compared with 2020, according to Destination Analysts, and is even ahead of 2019 levels. Meanwhile, 2022 will lack the extra impetus from those stimulus payments.

At the same time, inflation is eating into household spending power. If Americans are having to pay more for the things they need, such as food and fuel, there will be less left over for the things they want. Add in the prospect of higher borrowing costs, and it's no wonder that U.S. consumer sentiment has dropped to a 10-year low.

For retailers, this all makes judging demand into 2022 and beyond perilous. While it's fair to say next year's holiday season likely won't be as strong, the outlook from here is about as clear as mud.

One of the reasons that discounts are so scarce now is because the items currently in shops were ordered earlier in the year, amid uncertainty about COVID-19 cases and before the true extent of consumer strength emerged. Companies shouldn't be lulled into a false sense of security by the current strength in spending, and order in bigger volumes for next year's holiday season.

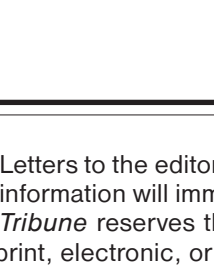
At the same time, chains must strike the right balance between protecting profits and making stores fun. Unlike in Europe, where there is no reason for Black Friday to exist, the shopping holiday is an American tradition. Many customers still expect some razzamatazz, and that means door-busters.

But everything in moderation. This year's extraordinary combination of soaring demand and constrained supply has given stores a golden ticket to end the vicious retail cycle of over-ordering and then deep-discounting to clear unwanted stock. They'd be wise to use it.

Thanks and More Out the Quarantine Door

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune



Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

This revision completes the five lines at the end of my Literary Nook submission published on Monday, Nov. 15, 2021.

Quarantine in Limbo: A Purgatory Story

"Sitting here in Limbo waiting for the tide to flow,
sitting here in Limbo knowing that I have to go"
—Lyrics excerpt from *Sitting In Limbo* by Jimmy Cliff.

Last year my older sister put me in quarantine
14 days where I grew up in upstate New York
2 flights coast to coast to visit my ailing brother
I had no objections to the old familiar scene
in isolation when it was time for knife and fork
I ate in the kitchen of our departed mother
out back were woods and overgrown roads
I walked in fall foliage where I did as a boy
to safely see my brother brought me great joy
I was allowed to get water from the kitchen sink
Then came a Tantalus tease hard to forget .
10 days next to the sea my feet never got wet
Tantalus tried to serve his son for food to guests
his punishment being unable to reach food or drink
our word "tantalizing" comes from that Greek myth.
Now in Saipan for ten days into quarantine I go
"sitting here in Limbo" between heaven and hell
what this pandemic purgatory is like I can't tell
at a seaside resort in a 5th floor isolated room
dreading a positive test and impending doom
three meals daily and some fresh vegan meals
I'm learning how a life in limbo isolation feels
though pandemic purgatory is not that great
there's time for writing and putting on weight.
Ten days inside a room is really quite a bore
but the delta COVID variant is hard to ignore.
Stay safe, give thanks for those helping us.

A bold new model for climate action

By MICHAEL TUBBS and DEBRA GORE-MANN
PROGRESSIVE PERSPECTIVES

As climate disasters hit state after state, fossil-fuel-funded members of Congress focus on a false choice between economic prosperity and fighting climate change. Meanwhile, politicians' lip service to the devastating impact of climate change on communities of color adds insult to injury.

There is a better way: California has quietly pioneered a new approach that should be adopted nationwide.

We know, because we helped make it happen.

The program is called Transformative Climate Communities. TCC uses climate action to build prosperous and thriving communities, focusing on neighborhoods with the biggest environmental and economic challenges. And, unlike most government programs, it empowers the communities themselves to lead.

In Stockton, California, like many communities, the legacy of environmental racism lingers. Latinx, Black and Asian American neighborhoods were devastated by a crosstown freeway that split communities and added to the pollution from heavy industry and the Port of Stockton. Historic disinvestment left the area with deteriorating infrastructure, poverty and unemployment.

That's typical, thanks to the legacy of redlining—policies that segregated communities of color and deprived them of financial investment.

Government programs aimed at addressing these issues have generally been too small, too fragmented, and imposed top-down on communities. Transformative Climate Communities does nearly everything differently.

TCC funds communities to develop neighborhood-scale climate plans based on priorities set by the residents themselves. Its structure builds in deep, ongoing community leadership—with government supporting, not dictating. TCC then provides implementation grants to make those dreams real.

Whereas governments usually put energy, transportation and housing policy in their own siloes, TCC creates holistic, connected plans that link these and other elements together.

For example, this might involve building energy-efficient, solar-powered affordable housing near public transit stops, improving and enhancing that transit system while also adding bike and pedestrian improvements that help residents access those transit stops. And it can go further by lining those bike and pedestrian paths with trees that take carbon out of the air and reduce urban "heat island" effects.

TCC also requires projects to create good-paying jobs and economic opportunities for residents, plus an anti-displacement strategy so residents can reap the benefits without getting pushed out.

In Stockton, The Greenlining Institute worked with local residents, community leaders and the mayor's office to develop a TCC application with support from the city manager. A coalition that emerged, called Rise Stockton, and received almost $11 million to begin implementation.

Residents, through a process that included 25 community meetings, door-to-door canvassing, surveys and more, created a Sustainable Neighborhood Plan. While the implementation grant was smaller than residents hoped for, it was enough to fund many urgently needed projects.

For example, 800 homes will receive water and energy efficiency upgrades, with local youth trained to do the work. City staff and volunteers will plant 1,750 trees, and solar power systems will be installed at four multi-family affordable housing sites, as well as for 108 low-income, single-family homeowners.

When The Greenlining Institute recently analyzed the impact of Transformative Climate Communities, the program's potential to change the entire climate discussion became clear: It can move us toward our climate goals while empowering communities to build a healthy, thriving future based on their own priorities. TCC should be replicated on a national scale.

We don't have to choose between protecting our climate and building prosperity in communities too often neglected by the government. We know how to do both.

If we truly want to build back better, Transformative Climate Communities has shown us how. Congress should take notes.

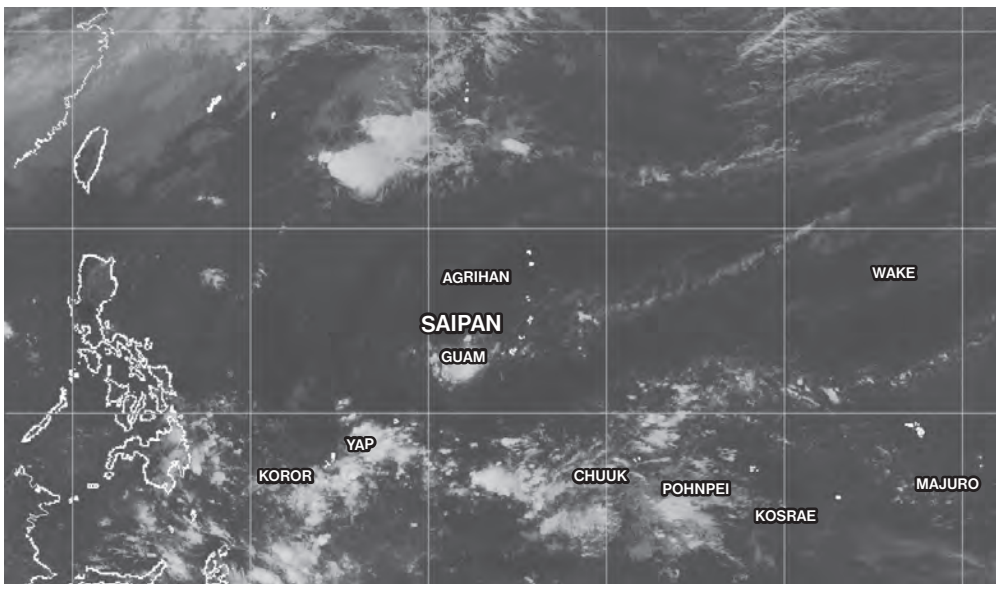
Michael Tubbs, the former mayor of Stockton, is special adviser for economic mobility and opportunity to California Gov. Gavin Newsom. Debra Gore-Mann is president and CEO of The Greenlining Institute, which recently published Fighting Redlining and Climate Change with Transformative Climate Communities. *This column was produced for* The Progressive *magazine and distributed by Tribune News Service.*

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.
87° 77°	87° 78°	87° 78°	87° 78°	87° 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 9:05 AM, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers moving through the Guam and Rota waters, with only a few showers moving through the Tinian and Saipan waters. The Ipan buoy reveals combined seas of 5 to 7 feet, composed of trade-wind waves and swell from the east-southeast.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 77°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	87° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:22 AM	5:43 PM
Wednesday	6:23 AM	5:43 PM
Thursday	6:23 AM	5:43 PM
Friday	6:24 AM	5:44 PM
Saturday	6:24 AM	5:44 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:22 AM	8:44 PM
Wednesday	-	10:12 AM	9:37 PM
Thursday	-	10:59 AM	10:30 PM
Friday	-	11:44 AM	11:23 PM
Saturday	-	12:26 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	70° / 59°
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	46° / 25°
Hong Kong	Cloudy	70° / 61°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	82° / 68°
London	Windy	59° / 54°
Los Angeles	Sunny	93° / 63°
Manila	Thunderstorms	90° / 79°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	88° / 64°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	81° / 70°
New York	Showers	53° / 32°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	55° / 43°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	52° / 43°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	52° / 37°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	63° / 52°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	65° / 40°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	66° / 54°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	41° / 28°
Tokyo	Rain	54° / 43°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	51° / 31°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:40 AM	Low Tide	-0.35
11:07 AM	High Tide	1.61
4:31 PM	Low Tide	1.17
8:40 PM	High Tide	1.48

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4, 5
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Vietnam welcomes 1st tourists to resort island after 2 years

Tourists pose for a photo after landing on Phu Quoc island, in Vietnam, Saturday, Nov. 20, 2020. AP

HANOI, Vietnam (AP)—More than 200 foreign tourists arrived on Vietnam's largest Phu Quoc island on Saturday, the first to visit the Southeast Asian country after nearly two years of border closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fully vaccinated travelers from South Korea will spend their holidays in hotel resorts without a mandatory 14-day quarantine. They were tested on arrival, and once the negative results are returned, they can join activities on the island including sightseeing, shopping and entertainment events that require vaccine certificates.

"The program is among the country's efforts to revive its tourism industry while reopening and developing the economy step by step under a new normal context," said Nguyen Trung Khanh, chairman of Vietnam's Administration of Tourism who welcomed the charter flight on the airport tarmac.

According to the Health Ministry, all staff members working in service facilities and 99% of Phu Quoc's adult residents have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. The island is planning to vaccinate children aged 12 to 17 next month.

Vietnam closed its border in March 2020, shortly after confirming its first COVID-19 case.

Since then, it only allowed only several international flights a week with foreign experts, diplomats and returning Vietnamese nationals. Those international arrivals must undergo a 14-day quarantine in designated hotels or government-run facilities.

Vietnam is the latest Asian nation to start opening up to fully vaccinated visitors. Thailand had begun by limiting tourists to its southern Phuket island before expanding to other areas, including Bangkok, since Nov. 1. The Indonesian island of Bali opened to arrivals last month with some restrictions including testing and a five-day hotel quarantine, and Malaysia opened up Langkawi island under a pilot bubble program.

Vietnamese workers at Chinese factory in Serbia cry for help

ZRENJANIN, Serbia (AP)—They are shivering in barracks without heat, going hungry and have no money. They say their passports have been taken by their Chinese employer and that they are now stuck in a grim plainland in Serbia with no help from local authorities.

These are the Vietnamese workers who are helping build the first Chinese car tire factory in Europe. The Associated Press visited the construction site in northern Serbia where some 500 of the workers are living in harsh conditions as China's Shandong Linglong Tire Co. sets up the huge facility.

The project, which Serbian and Chinese officials tout as a display of the "strategic partnership" between the two countries, has already faced scrutiny from environmentalists over potentially dangerous pollution from tire production.

Now, it has caught the attention of human rights groups in Serbia, which have warned that the workers could be victims of human trafficking or even slavery.

"We are witnessing a breach of human rights because the Vietnamese (workers) are working in terrible conditions," Serbian activist Miso Zivanov of the Zrenjaninska Akcija (Zrenjanin Action) nongovernmental organization told The Associated Press at the drab one-story warehouses where the workers are living.

"Their passports and identification documents have been taken by their Chinese employers," he said. "They have been here since May, and they received only one salary. They are trying to get back to Vietnam but first need to get back their documents."

Relatives of virus dead question Japan's stay-at-home policy

By YURI KAGEYAMA
AP BUSINESS WRITER

TOKYO (AP)—Yoshihiko Takeuchi, who ran a small restaurant on the island of Okinawa, told only a few friends he had the coronavirus. When he didn't answer phone calls from public health workers for three days, police went to his home and found him dead in his bed.

He was among hundreds of people who have died while subject to "jitaku ryoyo," or a policy of having some COVID-19 patients "recuperate at home."

In many countries, those with the virus stay home to isolate and recover, but critics say that in Japan, a country with one of the most affordable and accessible health care systems, people have been denied hospital care, and the policy amounted to "jitaku hochi," or "abandonment at home."

Takeuchi's sister and a daughter of another man who died at home of COVID-19 have started an online support group for grieving relatives of such victims.

Japan has seen caseloads fall dramatically in the past two months and the government has drawn up a road map to improve its pandemic response. A plan adopted Nov. 12 aims to have beds for up to 37,000 patients nationwide by the end of November, up from 28,000.

That compares with more than 231,000 coronavirus patients needing hospitalization in late August, according to government data. Many had to recuperate at home.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also promised to have health care workers routinely visit COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms at home.

Public anger over inadequate treatment in the country with the world's largest number of beds per capita is a factor driving such changes. Kishida's predecessor, Yoshihide Suga, resigned after only a year in office, mainly because of widespread dissatisfaction with the government's pandemic response.

Speaking up takes courage in a conformist society like Japan, and class action lawsuits are rare. But Kaori Takada, Takeuchi's sister, and others in her group believe their loved ones were denied the medical care they deserved.

Kaori Takada poses with her brother's photo in front of her family altar at her home in Matsubara, south of Osaka, western Japan, Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2021. AP

"I had to raise my voice," she said.

She is not sure what she will do. Thousands are following the group's Twitter account and others have come forward with similar painful stories.

Takada, who lives in Osaka and runs a small nursery in her home, was Takeuchi's only remaining relative. They spoke on the phone right before he was diagnosed, but he did not tell her he was sick alone at home. Given widespread phobias in Japan about COVID-19, he didn't want word to get out.

Takada said he was a gentle man and much loved.

"We are coming together, trying to heal, sharing how people have been treated so cruelly, and perhaps helping each other take that first step forward," she said in a telephone interview.

Japan's local public health bureaus, responsible for arranging for the care of COVID-19 patients, struggled to find hospitals that would admit them. In some cases, ambulances were shunted from one hospital to the next.

A few makeshift facilities provided treatment and supplemental oxygen, but calls to set up big field hospitals went unheeded.

In New York, for instance, hospitals were quickly converted, adding thousands of extra beds and ICUs for virus patients. A Navy medical ship and other facilities were turned into makeshift hospitals. At the outbreak's peak in April 2020, there were more than 1,600 new hospitalizations a day citywide.

In August of this year, when infections in Japan surged with the spread of the delta variant, Japan's hospital systems were quickly declared "stretched thin," even though it has had far fewer COVID-19 cases than the U.S., Europe and some other Asian and South American countries. In early September, more than 134,000 people were sick with the virus at home, according to Health Ministry records.

About 18,000 Japanese have died of COVID-19-related deaths in a population of 126 million. No one knows exactly how many died at home, though the National Police Agency, which tracks deaths, said 951 people have died at home since March 2020, with 250 of them in August 2021 alone.

Shigeru Omi, a top government adviser on the coronavirus and head of the Japan Community Health Care Organization, or JCHO, has urged the government to set up emergency field hospitals, specifically to avoid deaths from "jitaku ryoyo."

Japan's health care system is dominated by small, private hospitals and clinics, and few inpatient facilities are equipped to handle infectious diseases. Many beds are occupied by psychiatric patients and by the chronically ill and elderly, and there are relatively few doctors, intensive care specialists and nurses.

In some places, local authorities arranged for such hospitals to accept patients who were no longer infectious and rehabilitating from serious illness after they were treated at larger hospitals. But overall, caseloads vastly outnumbered the beds available for critical care.

The JCHO runs 57 of Japan's biggest hospitals. All are heavily subsidized by taxpayer money. The Health Ministry said it provided up to 100,000 yen ($900) per bed for COVID-19 patients.

In October, JCHO said it had prepared 972 beds nationwide for virus patients, or fewer than 7% of its more than 14,000 overall beds, though in August it temporarily made room for about 1,800 patients.

JCHO declined to comment on Kishida's call for providing thousands more beds.

Dr. Takanori Yamamoto, a critical care physician at Nagoya University, believes hospital care needs to be restructured to focus on seriously ill patients in designated facilities, instead of spreading them across small hospitals that each have a handful of ICU beds.

Resources were improperly managed, including widespread hospitalizations of people who didn't need it, he said. Public health bureaus are designed for research and are ill-suited to be "gatekeepers" for doling out COVID-19 care, he added.

Nation

Police: 'Some' killed when SUV hits Christmas parade

WAUKESHA, Wis. (AP)—An SUV sped through barricades and into a parade of Christmas marchers in suburban Milwaukee on Sunday, killing multiple people as it hit more than 20 adults and children in a horrifying scene captured by the city's livestream and the cellphones of onlookers.

Waukesha Police Chief Dan Thompson said "some" people had been killed but would not give an exact number. A person was in custody, as was the SUV, he said, but he did not give any indication of motive.

One video shows a woman screaming, "Oh my God!" repeatedly after a group of girls wearing Santa hats and dancing with white pompoms is struck. Another shows the SUV plowing into members of a marching band, their music replaced with terrified screams.

AP

Police tape cordons off a street in Waukesha, Wis., after a vehicle plowed into a Christmas parade hitting more than 20 people Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021.

Fire Chief Steven Howard said 11 adults and 12 children were injured and transported to hospitals by his department. It was unknown how many people were taken to hospitals by others. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin said it received 15 patients from the parade and no reported fatalities as of 8 p.m.

A Catholic priest, multiple parishioners and Waukesha Catholic schoolchildren were among those injured, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee spokeswoman Sandra Peterson said.

Police had custody of the vehicle, Thompson said. The investigation was ongoing, with assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

"What took place in Waukesha today is sickening, and I have every confidence that those responsible will be brought to justice," tweeted the state's top law enforcement officer, Attorney General Josh Kaul.

As the SUV broke through barricades at the annual parade, a Waukesha police officer fired his gun in an attempt to stop the vehicle, Thompson said. No bystanders were injured and Thompson said he did not know if the driver was struck by the officer's bullets.

One video shows the moment the SUV broke through the barricades and the sound of what appears to be several gunshots. Another video shows a young child dancing in the street as the SUV speeds by, just a few feet from her, before it hurtles into parade participants a few hundred feet ahead.

The video of the pompom dancers ends with a group of people tending to one of the girls who is on the ground.

Corey Montiho, a Waukesha school district board member, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that his daughter's dance team was hit by the SUV.

"There were pompoms and shoes and spilled hot chocolate everywhere. I had to go from one crumpled body to the other to find my daughter," he said. "My wife and two daughters were almost hit. Please pray for everybody. Please pray."

One entry in the parade, the Milwaukee Dancing Grannies, posted on its Facebook page that "members of the group and volunteers were impacted and we are waiting for word on their conditions." The group's profile describes them as a "group of grannies that meet once a week to practice routines for summer and winter parades."

About 80 thieves ransack department store near San Francisco

WALNUT CREEK, Calif. (AP)—About 80 people, some wearing ski masks and wielding crowbars, ransacked a high-end department store in the San Francisco Bay Area, assaulting employees and stealing merchandise before fleeing in cars waiting outside, police and witnesses said.

Three people were arrested while the majority got away after the large-scale theft Saturday night shocked shoppers at the Nordstrom at the Broadway Plaza outdoor mall in Walnut Creek, police said in a statement Sunday.

Two employees were assaulted and one was hit with pepper spray during what police called "clearly a planned event."

NBC Bay Area reporter Jodi Hernandez tweeted that she saw the thieves rush into the store in the downtown shopping district in the city some 20 miles (32 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco.

"About 25 cars just blocked the street and rushed into the Walnut Creek Nordstrom making off with goods before getting in cars and speeding away," Hernandez said on Twitter.

Cellphone video from the scene showed masked people streaming out of the store, carrying bags and boxes, jumping into the cars and fleeing the scene.

Brett Barrette, the manager of a nearby PF Chang's restaurant, began locking doors at his establishment while watching the chaos unfold.

"We probably saw 50 to 80 people in ski masks, crowbars, a bunch of weapons," Barrette told ABC 7 News.

The Walnut Creek Police Department said a firearm was recovered from one of the three arrested suspects.

Nordstrom employees began calling 911 around 9 p.m. as thieves entered the store and began stealing merchandise, police said.

"Walnut Creek Police investigators are in the process of reviewing surveillance footage to attempt to identify other suspects responsible for this brazen act," the department said in Sunday's statement.

Nordstrom was open as usual on Sunday.

The incident came a day after several high-end stores in San Francisco's Union Square were broken into by a large group of people who smashed windows, stole merchandise, and then ran to waiting cars, police said.

Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Yves Saint Laurent, Burberry, and Dolce & Gabbana were all targeted Friday night, Fox 2 News reported.

San Francisco Police Officer Robert Rueca said in a statement posted on social media that officers responded to reports of possible looting and vandalism at Union Square stores Friday night and arrested several people.

Stores in Union Square, a posh shopping district popular with tourists, have been targeted for years by well-organized thieves who at times have rammed vehicles into storefronts to break glass doors and windows and enter the buildings during non-business hours.

In Kenosha and beyond, guns become more common on US streets

As Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted in two killings that he said were self-defense, armed civilians patrolled the streets near the Wisconsin courthouse with guns in plain view.

In Georgia, testimony in the trial of Ahmaud Arbery's killers showed that armed patrols were commonplace in the neighborhood where Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, was chased down by three white men and shot.

The two proceedings sent startling new signals about the boundaries of self-defense as more guns emerge from homes amid political and racial tensions and the advance of laws that ease permitting requirements and expand the allowable use of force.

Across much of the nation, it has become increasingly acceptable for Americans to walk the streets with firearms, either carried openly or legally concealed. In places that still forbid such behavior, prohibitions on possessing guns in public could soon change if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down a New York law.

The new status quo for firearms outside the home was on prominent display last week in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Local resident Erick Jordan carried a rifle and holstered handgun near the courthouse where Rittenhouse was tried for killing two men and wounding a third with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle during a protest last year.

A protester carrying a rifle leaves the the Kenosha County Courthouse after speaking with Kenosha County Sheriffs Department officers, Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2021 in Kenosha, Wis., during the Kyle Rittenhouse murder trial.

AP

"I got a job to do—protect these people. That's it," said Jordan, referring to speakers at a news conference that was held in the hours after the verdict.

Speakers included an uncle of Jacob Blake, the Black man who was paralyzed in a shooting by a white police officer that touched off tumultuous protests across the city in the summer of 2020.

"This is my town, my people," Jordan said. "We don't agree on a lot of things, but we fight, we argue, we agree to disagree and go home safe, alive."

"That's real self-defense."

The comments were a counter punch to political figures on the right who welcomed the Rittenhouse verdict and condemned his prosecution.

Mark McCloskey, who pleaded guilty in June to misdemeanor charges stemming from when he and his wife waved a rifle and a handgun at Black Lives Matter protesters outside their St. Louis home in 2020, said the verdict shows that people have a right to defend themselves from a "mob." He currently is a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Missouri.

Asia

PH redeploys supply boats to shoal after Chinese blockade

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine military defiantly redeployed two supply boats on Monday to provide food to Filipino marines guarding a disputed shoal in the South China Sea after the Chinese coast guard used water cannons to forcibly turn the boats away in an assault last week that drew angry condemnation and warnings from Manila.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the two civilian wooden-hulled boats carrying navy personnel left western Palawan province and should reach the marines stationed on a navy ship at Second Thomas Shoal after an overnight trip. Lorenzana said the boats aren't being escorted by the navy or coast guard in accordance with a request by China's ambassador to Manila, who, he said, assured him in talks over the weekend that the boats would not be blocked again.

A navy plane will nevertheless fly over the remote shoal, which has been surrounded by Chinese surveillance ships in a years-long territorial standoff, when the Filipino boats reach it, the defense chief said. The Philippines says the shoal is in its internationally recognized exclusive economic zone, but China insists it has sovereignty over the waters.

"The Chinese ambassador assured me they will not be impeded but they requested there should be no escort," Lorenzana told reporters. Asked if he expects that the vessels won't be blocked, he replied, "We will see."

The government conveyed its "outrage, condemnation and protest of the incident" to China after two Chinese coast guard ships blocked the two Filipino boats on Tuesday and a third coast guard ship sprayed high-pressure streams of water on the boats, which were forced to abort their mission to transport food to the marines guarding the shoal, officials said.

Xi: China will not seek dominance over SE Asia

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese leader Xi Jinping says his country will not seek dominance over Southeast Asia or bully its smaller neighbors, amid ongoing friction over the South China Sea.

Jinping

Xi made the remarks Monday during a virtual conference with the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, marking the 30th anniversary of relations between the sides.

"China resolutely opposes hegemonism and power politics, wishes to maintain friendly relations with its neighbors and jointly nurture lasting peace in the region and absolutely will not seek hegemony or even less, bully the small," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

China has repeatedly sought to overcome concerns about its rising power and influence, particularly its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea that overlaps with the claims of ASEAN members Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines.

Xi's remarks came days after Chinese coast guard ships blocked and sprayed a powerful stream of water at two Philippine boats carrying supplies to troops at a disputed South China Sea shoal.

China has sought to strengthen its presence in the waterway, home to crucial shipping routes, fish stocks and undersea oil and gas deposits, by building airstrips and other features on islands created by piling sand and concrete atop coral reefs.

China's powerful navy, coast guard and maritime militia have also sought to block moves by regional countries to exploit resources within their exclusive economic zones, and it strongly objects to operations by the U.S. and other foreign militaries in the area. China and ASEAN have for years been negotiating a code of conduct for handling matters in the South China Sea but those talks have made little progress of late.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Philippine church leader charged with child sex trafficking

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The leader of a Philippines-based church was charged with having sex with women and underage girls who faced threats of abuse and "eternal damnation" unless they catered to the self-proclaimed "son of God," federal prosecutors announced Thursday. Apollo Carreon Quiboloy and two of his top administrators are among nine people named in a superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury last week and unsealed Thursday. The indictment includes three Los Angeles-based administrators of Quiboloy's church who were charged last year. The new indictment also names a church administrator in Hawaii. Quiboloy, 71, is head of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ church, founded in 1985. The church claims to have 6 million members in about 200 countries.

China says 5 citizens kidnapped from Congo mining operation

BEIJING (AP)—China says five of its citizens have been kidnapped from a mining operation in eastern Congo. The Chinese Embassy in Kinshasa posted on the WeChat online message service that the five were abducted early Sunday from the site in South Kivu province that borders Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. It called on all Chinese citizens to leave South Kivu and the neighboring provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, saying the security situation in the area was "extremely complex and grim" and that there was little possibility of providing aid in the event of an attack or kidnapping. No details were given about those kidnapped, who they worked for or who was suspected of taking them.

Olympic officials: Chinese tennis star Peng says she is safe

BEIJING (AP)—Missing Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai told Olympic officials in a video call from Beijing that she was safe and well, the International Olympic Committee said Sunday after Peng reappeared in public at a youth tournament in Beijing, according to photos released by the organizer. The 30-minute call came amid growing global alarm over Peng after she accused a former leading Communist Party official of sexual assault. China's ruling Communist Party has tried to quell fears abroad while suppressing information in China about Peng. Sunday's call—with IOC president Thomas Bach, athletes commission chair Emma Terho and IOC member Li Lingwei, a former vice president of the Chinese Tennis Association—appears to be Peng's first direct contact with sports officials outside China since she disappeared from public view on Nov. 2.

World

2 kidnapped missionaries in Haiti freed; 15 still held

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—Two of 17 members of a missionary group who were kidnapped more than a month ago have been freed in Haiti and are safe, "in good spirits and being cared for," their Ohio-based church organization announced Sunday.

A manager at the Christian Aid Ministries headquarters, left, speaks with a worker at the door of the center in Titanyen, north of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021. AP

Christian Aid Ministries issued a statement saying it could not give the names of those released, why they were freed or other information.

"While we rejoice at this release, our hearts are with the 15 people who are still being held," the group said.

The missionaries were kidnapped by the 400 Mawozo gang on Oct. 16. There are five children in the group of 16 U.S. citizens and one Canadian, including an 8-month-old. Their Haitian driver also was abducted, according to a local human rights organization.

The leader of the 400 Mawozo gang has threatened to kill the hostages unless his demands are met. Authorities have said the gang was demanding $1 million per person, although it wasn't immediately clear that included the children in the group.

The spokesman for Haiti's National Police, Gary Desrosiers, confirmed to The Associated Press that two hostages were released on Sunday.

The FBI, which is helping Haitian authorities recover the captives, declined to comment.

The release comes as Haiti struggles with a spike in gang-related violence and kidnappings, with the U.S. government recently urging U.S. citizens to leave Haiti amid deepening insecurity and a severe lack of fuel blamed on gangs blocking gas distribution terminals. On Friday, Canada announced it was pulling all but essential personnel from its embassy.

The fuel shortage has forced hospitals to turn away patients and paralyzed public transportation, with some schools closing and businesses shortening their work hours.

WORLD BRIEFS

Sudan military leaders reinstate deposed prime minister

CAIRO (AP)—Sudan's deposed prime minister signed a deal with the military on Sunday that will see him reinstated, almost a month after a military coup put him under house arrest. A key pro-democracy group that has mobilized dozens of protests had dismissed the deal as "a form of betrayal." The deal, announced in a ceremony broadcast live on Sudan state TV, envisages an independent technocratic Cabinet to be led by Abdalla Hamdok until elections can be held. It remains unclear how much power the government would hold. It would still remain under military oversight. It also remains unclear whether any political parties or pro-democracy groups have signed off on the agreement. The deal expects the military to release government officials and politicians arrested since the Oct. 25 coup.

Hamas gunman kills 1 before Israeli police shoot him dead

JERUSALEM (AP)—A Hamas militant on Sunday opened fire in Jerusalem's Old City, killing one Israeli and wounding four others before he was fatally shot by Israeli police. It was not immediately clear whether Hamas, an Islamic militant group sworn to Israel's destruction, had ordered the attack or whether one of its members had acted alone. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, has largely adhered to a cease-fire with Israel since an 11-day war last May and shootings attacks inside the Old City are rare. Police said the attack took place near an entrance to a contested flashpoint shrine known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. Violence surrounding the site, which is considered holy by both faiths, has triggered previous rounds of fighting, including the war last May.

Austria begins national lockdown to fight surging infections

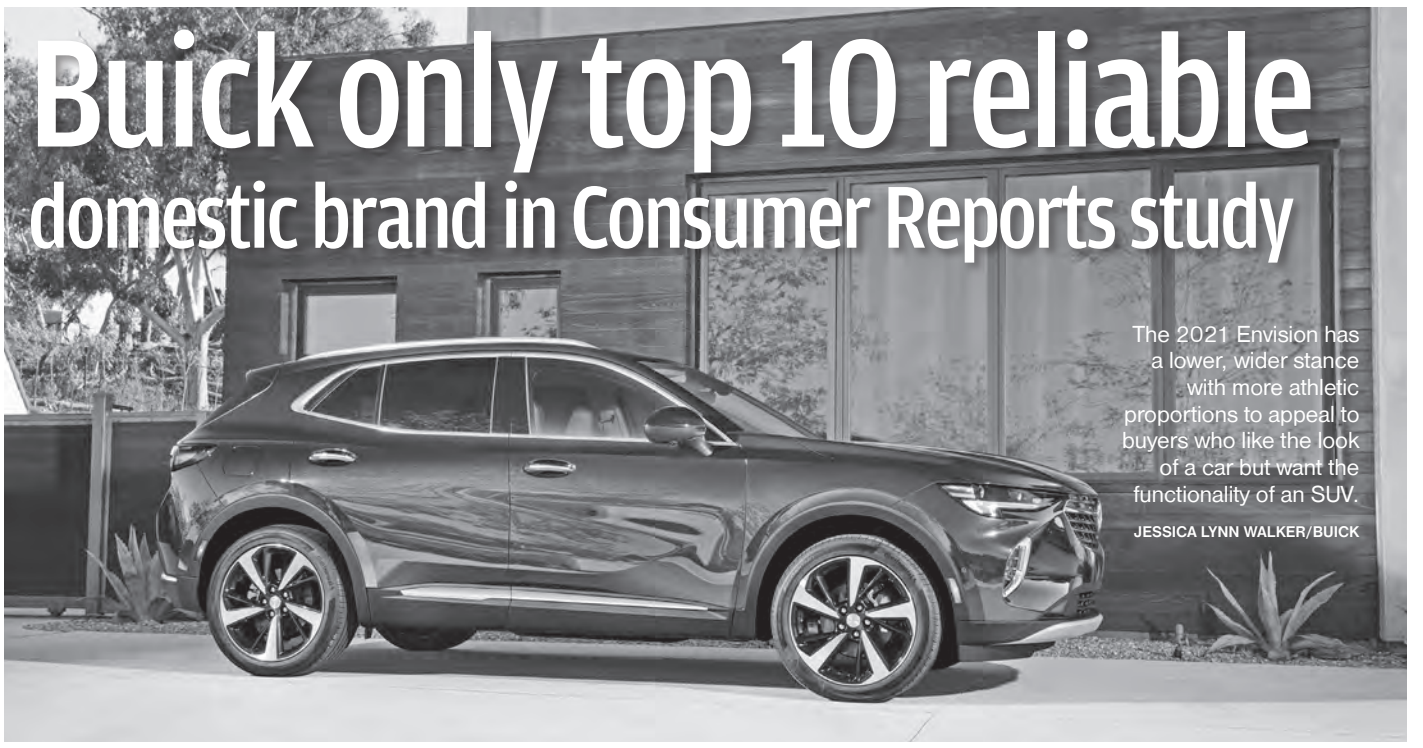
VIENNA (AP)—Austria went into a nationwide lockdown early Monday to combat soaring coronavirus infections, a step being closely watched by other European governments struggling with national outbreaks that are straining health care systems. The measures are expected to last for a maximum of 20 days but will be reevaluated after 10. They require people to stay home apart from basic reasons like getting groceries, going to the doctor and exercising. Restaurants and most shops must close and larger events will be canceled. Schools and day care centers can remain open, but parents are encouraged to keep their children home. Austria hopes to lift the measures on Dec. 13 but may keep a further lockdown on the unvaccinated.

Thousands protest Belgium's tight COVID-19 restrictions

BRUSSELS (AP)—Ten of thousands of people demonstrated through central Brussels on Sunday to protest reinforced COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Belgian government to counter the latest spike in coronavirus cases. Many among the police estimate of 35,000 at the rally had already left for home when the demonstration descended into violence as several hundred people started pelting police, smashing cars and setting garbage bins ablaze.

Overdrive

Buick only top 10 reliable domestic brand in Consumer Reports study



The 2021 Envision has a lower, wider stance with more athletic proportions to appeal to buyers who like the look of a car but want the functionality of an SUV.

JESSICA LYNN WALKER/BUICK

By BREANA NOBLE
THE DETROIT NEWS

Toyota Motor Corp.'s Lexus luxury brand topped Consumer Reports' 2021 Auto Reliability Report with Buick finishing at No. 5 as the only domestic brand to make the top 10 of 28 makes.

The results, released on Thursday before the Automotive Press Association, highlight the reliability of hybrid and plug-in vehicles, though problems persisted particularly with advanced technology in electric vehicles and with transmissions in traditional international combustion engine vehicles.

The report is based on survey data from more than 300,000 vehicles that comes as customers are having to pay record vehicle prices amid a global microchip shortage and other supply-chain bottlenecks that have stifled production.

"The cost of the vehicle is going up, and supply-chain problems impact new vehicles and parts," said Jake Fisher, senior director of auto testing at Consumer Reports. "It's one thing if a vehicle is under warranty or you're leasing a vehicle, you're not going to pay for repairs. If you have a vehicle that needs a component and that component is not available, though, that can be a big problem."

At Buick, the Encore and redesigned Envision were above average, though transmission, drive system and blank in-car electronic screen issues dropped the Enclave to below average.

Aside from Buick, General Motors Co. had Chevrolet finishing at No. 14, Cadillac at No. 16 and GMC at No. 22. For Stellantis NV, problems with the Pacifica minivan dropped Chrysler to No. 12, issues with brakes and emissions on the Ram Classic pickup put its brand at No. 21 and the Wrangler's steering and suspension issues extended to the Gladiator truck at Jeep, which was No. 26. Ford finished at No. 18 with Lincoln in dead last, just below Tesla Inc. at No. 28.

Ford and Lincoln "had a lot of very big redesigns very quickly," Fisher said. "It tends to be cyclical with Ford and Lincoln. As that product ages, the reliability ages. We would expect improved reliability from Ford and Lincoln as they slow down the cadence of introduces."

The Lexus GX SUV topped reliability, while the Subaru Ascent SUV finished last. Detroit automakers, however, had an unusually strong showing in their vehicles' segments:

- Buick Envision topped luxury compact SUVs
- Chevrolet Trailblazer was most reliable of subcompact SUVs
- Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD and GMC Sierra 2500 HD topped full-size pickups
- Chrysler 300 beat out other midsize and large cars
- Ford Bronco Sport was most reliable of compact SUVs
- Ford Mustang Mach-E beat out other electric SUVs
- Ford Ranger topped midsize pickups

The results showed fully electric SUVs were some of the least reliable vehicles. Although Chevrolet took a hit from the recall for battery fire risks in the Bolt EV and EUV, the high rate of problems for electric SUVs weren't for electric powertrains but climate controls, in-car electronics, and power equipment.

"It's not just a way to save fuel and money at the pump," Fisher said of the electric EVs. "It's about being an early adopter and having the latest tech. There's new ways of opening doors and electric actuated vents. Adding all that equipment adds to that complexity, and those are the type of things that are going wrong."

That's in contrast to hybrids and plug-in hybrids like the Honda Insight, Kia Niro and the Toyota Prius, Prius Prime, RAV4 Prime and Venza. They were some of the most reliable models, despite the complicated drivetrains. But even the new-for-2021 Venza uses a tried-and-true powertrain, Fisher said.

"They are very practical vehicles," he said. "There's not a lot of the new technology."

As for internal combustion engine vehicles, transmissions were a problems for brands like Kia and Lincoln, Toyota's Corolla hatchback, Chrysler's Pacifica minivan and Jeep's Cherokee crossover. Transmissions with eight or nine ratios or continuously variable transmissions are more complex and had more issues.

The electric vehicle invasion is already here

By KYLE STOCK
BLOOMBERG NEWS

Stay on top of the electric car revolution by signing up to our Hyperdrive newsletter here.

Until recently, car companies not named Tesla had a general stance on electric vehicles: We'll start making them en masse, when people start buying them en masse.

The late Fiat-Chrysler Chief Executive Officer Sergio Marchionne went so far as to implore drivers not to buy his company's seminal electric Fiat; the unit economics were so poor, he reasoned, that he lost money on every sale ($14,000 by Marchionne's math).

Well, people are buying electric vehicles now, partly because the climate is simmering closer to a boil and partly because the auto industry is finally making appealing battery-powered machines in volume. Ultimately, the whither and why is less important than the what.

Drivers around the world will buy about 5.6 million electric passenger vehicles this year, according to a new report from BloombergNEF released in concert with the COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference. That's almost double the number purchased last year and, more importantly, it represents almost 8% of all vehicle sales."We are seeing some more organic demand for EVs," Aleksandra O'Donovan, one of the BNEF analysts who authored the report, commented via email. Among the factors affecting this rise: "One, the wider choice of electric vehicles now available to customers, and even more importantly, vehicles addressing those sought after segments like the SUVs," O'Donovan said.

Also, EV sales are 20% or more of total vehicle sales for several European automakers, including Volvo and Daimler. And there are more than 500 models of EVs and fuel cell vehicles available for sale today—just six years ago, that figure was under 100.

Charging often has been cited as the reason why adoption wasn't happening more quickly. But the narrative around the dearth of public charging infrastructure creating a bottleneck to EV adoption also is set to change, as consumers more and more are taking matters into their own hands. Garages and parking lots will see some 2.1 million vehicle chargers installed this year, according to the BNEF report, a 63% increase over the number of private plugs at the start of the year.

Meanwhile, electric motors are being put to work, in trucks, buses and tractors. BloombergNEF expects commercial buyers to purchase 150,000 electric vehicles this year, also nearly double last year's tally. Stretching how far these machines can travel between charges plus predictable drive cycles and relatively low maintenance costs increasingly tilt the economics in favor of things like electric mail trucks and battery-powered flower delivery vans.

MOTORMOUTH

By BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.

What will cold winter do to hybrid?

Q I am considering buying a hybrid car. When I lay up my conventional car whenever we go to Florida each winter, I connect a battery tender to the battery, and it seems to survive the winter very nicely. However, I am not sure what to do with a hybrid. What will happen to the car sitting for five months in a cold garage? What steps would I take to lay it up?

A Short answer? The battery pack will get weak. If you leave your hybrid at home in Connecticut, the winter cold will take a toll. Connect the car's charger. This will maintain the drive battery pack much as your battery tender maintains the 12-volt battery. If possible, store the vehicle in a heated garage.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q I got a Tesla Model Y last year and have a few questions about drafting. How close do you need to be? How much does it help? How does it affect the truck you are drafting behind? Do truckers care?

BTW love the car and will never buy another ICE [internal combustion engine] car.

A Drafting, or following closely enough to take advantage of the leading vehicle's eddy, is never a good idea. It leaves very little time to react in an emergency. For example, if the front vehicle swerves to avoid an obstacle, you may not have enough time to avoid the same. If you draft behind a truck, especially a semi, the driver cannot see you. There are blind spots for semi drivers: front, left side, right side and behind. Behind is the worst. If you cannot see the tractor's mirrors the driver cannot see you behind the trailer. Truckers do not like that. Leave drafting to race car drivers on a closed track.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q I purchased a Porsche SUV in Florida 5 years ago and it's never been in Indiana during the winter. Do I need to worry about the antifreeze or is that always cared for by the manufacturer, no matter where you purchase it? If not, where is the best place or way to test the level of winter protection?

A Although we still call it antifreeze, the stuff in the radiator is more correctly called coolant. It not only prevents freezing but coolant increases the boiling temperature to well above that of plain water. If you opted for the prepaid Porsche Scheduled Maintenance Plan (PSMP) you can rest easy. The plan provides maintenance at the factory recommended scheduled services. But you can have any qualified technician, dealer or independent, test the coolant quality.

■ ■ ■ ■

Q We have a 2019 Subaru that's coming up on a 40,000-mile maintenance check. The closest dealer is over an hour away, one way, and they want about $1,400 for all the necessary things to be done. My question is: Do we need to spend the time and money to visit a dealer, or can we just bring it to an established local garage and have them do the work?

A You can certainly, and lawfully, take your car to a local shop for service. Just keep all documentation including the repair order and invoice, the names and part numbers of any components such as the oil filter. This will keep the warranty intact unless your car has exceeded the 5-year/50,000 mile Subaru powertrain warranty. To get the full lowdown on this topic, look up the federal Magnuson–Moss Warranty Act.

Life & Style

Hitmakers BTS stamp their authority on American Music Awards

NEW YORK (AP)—South Korean superstars BTS were crowned artist of the year at the American Music Awards on Sunday, brushing aside challenges from Taylor Swift, Drake and The Weeknd as they took home a total of three awards and teamed up with Coldplay for a raucous "My Universe" and closed the show with "Butter."

"Seven boys from Korea, united by love for music, met the love and support from all the armies all over the world," said BTS' RM after the group won their artist of the year for the first time. "This whole thing is a miracle. Seriously, we would never take this for granted."

Coldplay and BTS perform "My Universe" at the American Music Awards on Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021 at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles. AP PHOTO/CHRIS PIZZELLO

The band was also named favorite pop duo or group and got the favorite pop song award for "Butter."

The show celebrated the best popular music for a second pandemic year with a mix of live and pre-taped performances. Silk Sonic's Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak kicked off the awards on a funky, R&B and pre-taped note with their "Smokin Out the Window" and Jennifer Lopez pre-taped her "On My Way" from her upcoming romantic comedy "Marry Me."

An earlier scheduled performance of "Butter" by BTS and Megan Thee Stallion was scrapped after the rapper cited personal reasons for dropping out Saturday. She turned out to be a big winner: named favorite female hip-hop artist, her "Good News" winning for favorite hip-hop album and her "Body" was crowned favorite trending song, a new award this year.

Olivia Rodrigo came into the night with a leading seven nominations but only took home the crown for favorite new artist of the year. "Writing songs is my favorite thing in the whole world and I am so grateful for everyone who has embraced my music," she said.

Saudi critic's fiancee urges Justin Bieber to cancel F1 show

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Pop star Justin Bieber is facing growing calls to cancel his concert in Saudi Arabia next month as the fiancee of slain Saudi critic Jamal Khashoggi joined a chorus of voices on Sunday urging him not to perform at the kingdom's Formula One race.

Bieber

In an open letter published by The Washington Post, Hatice Cengiz urged the Canadian megastar to cancel his Dec. 5 performance in the Red Sea city of Jiddah to "send a powerful message to the world that your name and talent will not be used to restore the reputation of a regime that kills its critics."

'Ghostbusters: Afterlife' captures $44 million in theaters

Busting ghosts is still a fairly lucrative business after almost 40 years.

Heading into Thanksgiving weekend, the latest attempt to revive "Ghostbusters" drew a sizable audience to theaters, while the awards darling "King Richard," like most dramas in the pandemic era, is struggling.

With a reverence for nostalgia and a few high-profile cameos in its arsenal, "Ghostbusters: Afterlife" opened above industry expectations with $44 million in ticket sales from 4,315 locations, according to studio estimates Sunday. The Sony movie directed by Jason Reitman and starring Paul Rudd, Finn Wolfhard and Mckenna Grace is playing exclusively in theaters.

"Afterlife's" first weekend is actually trailing that of Paul Feig's "Ghostbusters" with Melissa McCarthy and Kristen Wiig, which had a $46 million opening in June 2016. Aside from the somewhat unpredictable pandemic-era moviegoing habits, the crucial difference is that "Afterlife" cost about half as much to make.

"It's a really solid number," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's senior media analyst. "Part of that is the theatrical exclusive release. This shows that this brand is really powerful even some 37 years after the original became a cultural phenomenon."

The weekend's other high-profile offering didn't fare as well. "King Richard," the well-reviewed drama starring Will Smith as the father of tennis greats Venus and Serena Williams, earned $5.7 million from 3,302 locations, missing its modest expectations by almost half. The Warner Bros. film was released simultaneously on HBO Max and in theaters.

"It really is have and have nots," said Jeff Goldstein, Warner Bros. head of domestic distribution. "Clearly the avid moviegoers are starting to come back, but more casual moviegoers are more reluctant."

Although traditional blockbusters have managed to draw decent audiences, dramas have disproportionately struggled during the pandemic. Most have debuted in the $3 million range. One of the more successful launches was the Aretha Franklin biopic "Respect," which opened to $8.8 million.

But the outlook could be promising for "King Richard" with its 92% fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes, A CinemaScore from audiences and long awards season runway. In 2018, "Green Book" opened on Thanksgiving weekend to only $5.5 million, but by the end of awards season it had grossed $85 million.

Meanwhile, in limited release from A24, Mike Mills' "C'mon C'mon" had the best limited platform debut since February 2020 with $134,447 from five screens. The film stars Joaquin Phoenix as man looking after his 9-year-old nephew.

1. **"Ghostbusters: Afterlife," $44 million.**
2. **"Eternals," $10.8 million.**
3. **"Clifford The Big Red Dog," $8.1 million.**
4. **"King Richard," $5.7 million.**
5. **"Dune," $3.1 million.**
6. **"Venom: Let There Be Carnage," $2.8 million.**
7. **"No Time to Die," $2.7 million.**
8. **"The French Dispatch," $970,000.**
9. **"Belfast," $940,000.**
10. **"Ron's Gone Wrong," $888,000.**

The box office is still far from where it was pre-pandemic. The weekend leading into Thanksgiving usually usually gets around $200 million in ticket sales, but this weekend will net out around $83 million.

At this point, the 2021 North American box office could net out with around $4 billion. In 2019 it was $11.4 billion. And there are still some major movies on the horizon in December, like "West Side Story," "Spider-Man: No Way Home" and "The Matrix Resurrections."

"Thanksgiving and the holidays are usually a really good time at the box office. The marketplace every week is a building block in that road to recovery for movie theaters," Dergarabedian said. "These last six weeks are going to be critical. This is a final push."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday. ***(AP)***

Man gets descriptive when identifying women

DEAR ABBY: When my boyfriend talks about women, he doesn't always refer to them by their name. In most cases, I don't know the individual. But even if he does refer to her by name, what bothers me is he always follows it by describing her boobs (i.e., "the one with the big boobs, she has got to be at least a 42D, they stick straight out," or, "she's petite with a very small waistline"). Yet, he says he loves my figure and always expresses he loves the way I'm built.

I have ignored the "big boob" comments because (I'm guessing) he gets some kind of satisfaction from making them, so I have gone along with it. However, it is becoming increasingly annoying. How can I get him to stop these comments and either refer to the women by name, or "Jerry's wife," "the woman" or "the lady"? Frankly, I'm not interested in the description; her name will suffice. Also, can you explain why he always slips in the description of the woman's anatomy?

MORE THAN A BODY

DEAR MORE: A direct way to get your boyfriend to cut it out would be to tell him in plain English that the graphic description of these women's anatomy is a huge turnoff. As to your second question, your boyfriend does it because this is how he classifies the females he meets. He does not view them as individuals; he identifies them according to their anatomy.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: On two occasions, I have given my girlfriend money (several thousand dollars) to help her cover medical expenses. Both times her father promised to pay me back. He made good on his promise the first time, but it has been almost two months since I fronted the money and he hasn't paid me back. He promised to do it when he got paid, but he has "gotten paid" several times since.

I'm considering taking him to small claims court. It wouldn't be his first time in that situation. Am I cheap? Or am I right for wanting to be repaid? If I'm right, how should I proceed?

UNPAID IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR UNPAID: You were kind to front the money for your girlfriend's medical treatment. Her father should not have promised to repay you if he didn't intend to follow through. Contact him again and see if you can't agree on a payment plan that will be easier for him than paying you a lump sum. But if that doesn't work, I hope you got the promise he made IN WRITING. If you didn't, and you take him to small claims court, you will have no proof to show a judge.

That said, if you DO have something in writing, proceed by contacting the county clerk in the small claims court district closest to where her father lives, fill out a "statement of claim" form at the clerk's office and pay the filing fee. I wish you luck!

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

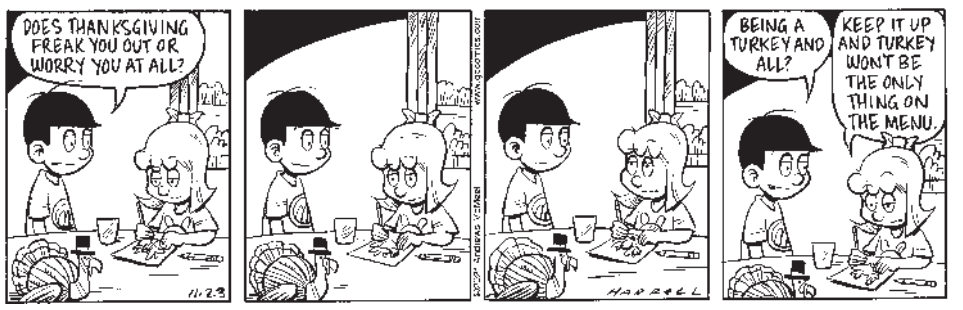
LOOK WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH BIG SOCKS!
JUST PUT ONE OVER EACH EAR, AND ONE OVER YOUR NOSE...
AN ELEPHANT! HA HA! I WANT SOME SOCKS TOO!
IF I MISS THE BUS, IT'S GOING TO BE UNPLEASANT AROUND HERE!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


DOES THANKSGIVING FREAK YOU OUT OR WORRY YOU AT ALL?
BEING A TURKEY AND ALL?
KEEP IT UP AND TURKEY WON'T BE THE ONLY THING ON THE MENU.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THAT GUY IN NORTH KOREA REALLY TICKS ME OFF. WE SHOULD JUST NUKE HIM.
YOU CAN'T GO AROUND NUKING EVERYONE WHO IRRITATES YOU.
YEAH, LUCKY FOR YOU.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

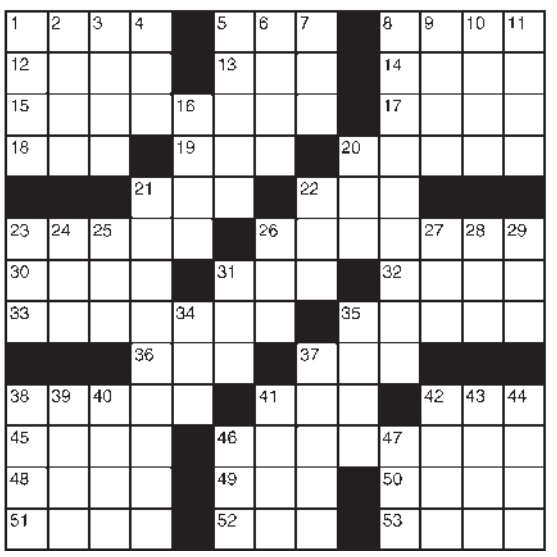
ACROSS
1 Watch chains
5 Biol. or chem.
8 Dogpatch creator
12 On the Aegean, say
13 Fire
14 Experts
15 Dog's playthings
17 Ostrich kin
18 Sailor
19 Golfer Ernie
20 Skilled
21 Scoundrel
22 Tel. number add-on
23 Frog's sound
26 Homes for queens
30 Baltic feeder
31 Sigma follower
32 Nonsense
33 Pickle containers
35 Plaintive poem
36 Tolkien beast
37 Hearty brew
38 Island south of Sicily
41 Writer Tarbell
42 "Uh-huh"
45 Help a hood
46 Football-game start
48 Baja boy
49 Oklahoma tribe
50 Early automaker
51 Halt
52 Petrol
53 Capricorn

DOWN
1 Datum
2 Job-safety org.
3 "Cheers" order
4 Cutting tool
5 Berate
6 Low isles
7 Connections
8 Foldable furniture
9 Dull pain
10 Incubator noise
11 Jrs.' exam
16 Ship wood
20 Rocker Rose
21 Redhead
22 Vichy water
23 Corn core
24 Vitamin stat
25 Not 'neath
26 — de deux
27 Pool stick
28 Chang's brother
29 Blue hue
31 Pampering, for short
34 Mound stat
35 Flair
37 Juan's farewell
38 Supplies with staff
39 Slightly
40 Carson's successor
41 Tiny bit
42 Present-day "carpe diem"
43 Fed. food inspector
44 Whispered "Hey!"
46 Gear-wheel tooth
47 Dress (up)

Solution time: 22 mins.

B	T	S			R	M	S		B	U	L	B
A	R	A	B		P	O	W		I	S	E	E
B	A	L	I		M	A	E		L	O	A	D
S	P	E	L	T		T	E	A	L			
			L	A	W		P	S	Y	C	H	O
S	A	T	I	R	E	S		A	C	R	E	S
A	G	E	E		B	E	G		R	O	W	S
T	U	N	E	D		C	A	L	Y	P	S	O
E	A	T	I	N	G		B	A	S			
			L	A	I	D		S	I	O	W	S
K	I	W	I		M	E	W		A	B	I	L
I	R	A	S		M	A	A		L	I	F	E
M	E	S	H		E	R	G			T	E	T

Yesterday's answer 11-23



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Miley Cyrus, 29; Salli Richardson-Whitfield, 54; Robin Roberts, 61; Bruce Hornsby, 67.

Happy Birthday: Pick up the pace, and knock off all the items on your to-do list this year. The time has come to act responsibly and put unfinished business to rest. Concentrate on gaining freedom to live life in a manner that is meaningful to you. Relieve stress by putting health, finances and promises to rest. Pursue your dreams. Your numbers are 3, 12, 20, 28, 37, 43, 49.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You can think what you want, but don't blurt it out. Diplomacy will help you get things done. Focus on the result, and stay away from anyone looking for a fight. Don't take a risk with your health, position or reputation. ✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): You'll be ready to make a change, but before you do, consider the pros and cons, along with the cost involved. Turn your vision inward; consider starting small and with personal improvements that will make your life easier or more meaningful. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Learn from your experiences, and avoid putting your reputation at risk. Don't share personal information if you don't want to end up in a vulnerable position. Look for an opportunity that will allow you to use your skills more to your liking. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Do something that makes you think and prompts you to get involved in events that reflect your concerns. Speak up and become part of the solution, and you will make new contacts. A romantic encounter will lead to personal gain. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Check due dates. Don't feel pressured to make a change or move because someone else does. Look for healthy alternatives when faced with choices. Physical and mental activity are encouraged. Revamp the way you approach your responsibilities. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Reach out to someone who always lifts your spirits. A networking function will lead to information that will help you redefine what you have to offer. Pick up skills that will round out your qualifications for something that interests you. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Take a moment to find out how others feel and think, and it will change how you respond and spare emotional upset. Don't give up; find common ground that gives everyone you need to pitch in a reason to participate. ✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Embrace what life has to offer, and explore the possibilities that come your way. Personal growth due to circumstances will lead to a lifestyle change or force play to make a move. Have faith, and go with the flow. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Look over your finances and consider what you can do to achieve the life you want. Contemplate how to sell off what you no longer need, and invest in something that brings you joy. Personal gain is within reach. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Put everything into doing the best job possible. An energetic approach to life, love and happiness won't disappoint you. Make positive changes at home and work that will give you a new lease on life. Turn your dream into a reality. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Listen and learn. Don't fall prey to a fast-talking sales pitch. You don't have to make a move if you aren't ready. Following someone will not help you achieve what you want out of life. Focus on fulfilling your needs. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You'll get a financial boost if you are energetic in your pursuits. Adapt what you learn by watching others who help you reach your goal. A physical improvement will draw attention and the interest of someone you love. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, encouraging and proactive. You are secretive and insightful.

✪ ***star:*** *Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes.* ✪✪ ***stars:*** *You can accomplish, but don't rely on others.* ✪✪✪ ***stars:*** *Focus and you'll reach your goals.* ✪✪✪✪ ***stars:*** *Aim high; start new projects.* ✪✪✪✪✪ ***stars:*** *Nothing can stop you; go for gold.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2		7			6	3		
	1			3		4		9
					5	8		2
		8						
	5						1	
						5		
1		6	8					
5		3		4			2	
		9	7			6		4

Difficulty Level ★★ 11/23

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

5	4	2	1	9	6	7	3	8
3	1	7	5	4	8	2	6	9
8	6	9	7	3	2	5	4	1
1	3	8	9	6	5	4	7	2
7	9	6	8	2	4	3	1	5
2	5	4	3	1	7	9	8	6
4	7	1	6	5	9	8	2	3
6	8	5	2	7	3	1	9	4
9	2	3	4	8	1	6	5	7

Difficulty Level ★ 11/23

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

TRIVETS **Solution: 7 letters**

E	V	S	E	T	A	L	P	T	O	P	A	E	T	R
G	N	E	D	A	M	A	G	E	K	E	T	T	L	E
E	R	O	R	K	E	V	L	G	M	U	C	V	T	V
L	W	A	C	S	T	O	N	U	J	A	O	A	I	A
B	O	A	N	I	A	I	C	I	M	A	R	E	C	S
A	R	Q	U	I	L	T	E	D	D	I	K	B	U	N
D	K	F	S	O	T	I	I	R	O	N	N	P	L	S
N	T	T	O	I	D	E	S	L	P	T	P	U	P	E
A	O	C	L	L	E	S	A	L	I	O	F	A	M	P
P	P	E	N	E	D	O	O	W	R	T	C	D	A	T
X	S	E	H	A	I	A	L	T	T	E	Y	N	T	A
E	V	S	P	B	A	M	B	O	O	N	S	U	S	B
O	I	F	A	B	R	I	C	L	O	O	B	O	W	L
D	I	N	E	R	B	G	T	C	E	T	O	R	P	E
W	A	S	H	A	B	L	E	E	S	S	A	L	G	S

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Aluminum, Bamboo, Bowl, Braided, Brass, Ceramic, Cooling, Cork, Damage, Dine, Dish, Expandable, Fabric, Foil, Foldable, Glass, Granite, Iron, Jute, Kettle, Marble, Mats, Metal, Oval, Oven, Pads, Pans, Plates, Pots, Protect, Quilted, Rack, Rate, Round, Saver, Silicone, Space, Stone, Support, Tables, Teapot, Tiles, Tool, Tripod, Versatility, Washable, Wooden, Worktop

Yesterday's Answer: Language

Jo's Jewels Collector's Edition is back by popular demand! Purchase online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Vikings keep Rodgers off field late, nip Packers, 34-31

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Greg Joseph made a 29-yard field goal as time expired to give the Minnesota Vikings a 34-31 victory over the Green Bay Packers on Sunday, finishing a classic back-and-forth with Aaron Rodgers by making sure the three-time NFL MVP didn't get to touch the ball last.

Kirk Cousins passed for 341 yards and three touchdowns for the Vikings (5-5), who watched yet another game come down to the final play after Rodgers threw three of his four touchdown passes in the second half.

Unable to practice much at all this week because of a toe injury, after missing much of the first half of the month with COVID-19, Rodgers finished 23 for 33 for a season-high 385 yards for Green Bay (8-3).

Justin Jefferson had eight receptions for 169 yards and two scores, including a third-down catch against rookie Eric Stokes that Cousins delivered for a 23-yard touchdown while being decked on a blitz by Darnell Savage.

On the next play from scrimmage, Rodgers threw a rainbow to Marquez Valdes-Scantling streaking past safety Xavier Woods for a 75-yard score to tie the game just before the two-minute warning.

Cousins then led the Vikings into position for the winning kick.

Green Bay had given up just 34 points over its previous three games.

Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson (18) celebrates with teammate Dede Westbrook (12) after catching a 23-yard touchdown pass during the second half of an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers, Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021, in Minneapolis. AP

Texans 22, Titans 13

In Nashville, Tenn., Tyrod Taylor ran for two touchdowns and threw for 107 yards and Houston snapped the NFL's longest active skid, beating Tennessee to end the league's longest winning streak.

The Texans (2-8) came in having lost eight straight since winning their season opener and hadn't scored a TD on the road since Sept. 19.

Desmond King had two of the Texans' four interceptions — three in the fourth quarter to snuff out the Titans' attempted rally. Houston turned those and a fumbled punt into 13 points. The Texans also had two sacks.

The Titans (8-3) snapped their six-game winning streak with their first loss since Oct. 3. That came to the then-winless New York Jets.

Chiefs 19, Cowboys 9

In Kansas City, Mo., Clyde Edwards-Helaire ran for 63 yards and a touchdown in his return from injured reserve, Chris Jones and the Kansas City defense made life miserable for Dak Prescott, and the Chiefs beat Dallas.

Patrick Mahomes was 23 of 37 for 260 yards with an interception and a fumble for Kansas City, but he was bailed out by a defense that played its best game of the year. Charvarius Ward picked off Prescott in the end zone near the end of the first half, and Chris Jones had 3 1/2 sacks while forcing and recovering a fumble.

The result: The Chiefs (7-4) improved to 4-0 against the NFC East with their fourth straight win overall.

Colts 41, Bills 15

In Orchard Park, N.Y., Jonathan Taylor set a franchise record by scoring five times and took over the NFL lead in both yards rushing and touchdowns as Indianapolis routed Buffalo.

Taylor scored three times in the first half, including a 23-yard catch, en route to the first five-touchdown game in the league this season.

Taylor finished with a season-high 185 yards rushing and four touchdowns and has 1,122 yards this season after beginning the day tied for the league lead with the injured Derrick Henry of Tennessee. Taylor has 14 touchdowns, moving ahead of Arizona's James Conner, who began the day with 12.

Taylor topped 100 yards from scrimmage and scored a touchdown for the eighth consecutive game, matching an NFL record set by Lydell Mitchell of the Colts in 1975-76 and the Chargers' LaDainian Tomlinson in 2006.

Ravens 16, Bears 13

In Chicago, subbing for star quarterback Lamar Jackson, Tyler Huntley led a winning drive capped by Devonta Freeman's 3-yard run with 22 seconds remaining, and Baltimore beat Chicago.

Jackson was sidelined by illness for the AFC North-leading Ravens (7-3), who ruled him out 90 minutes before kickoff. The 2019 MVP was a full participant in practice Friday after being held out the previous two days. Coach John Harbaugh said Wednesday the illness was not COVID-19.

Justin Tucker kicked three field goals for the Ravens, who rebounded from a loss to Miami. The Bears (3-7) lost their fifth straight.

Chicago's Andy Dalton threw two touchdown passes after Justin Fields left the game with a rib injury in the third quarter.

Cardinals 23, Seahawks 13

In Seattle, Colt McCoy was outstanding filling in for Kyler Murray, throwing for 328 yards and two touchdowns, Arizona beat Seattle.

For the second straight season, McCoy was a backup thrust into a starting role at Seattle and walked away with a victory. Last year, McCoy was with the New York Giants. This season, it was with Murray missing a third straight game due to an ankle injury.

McCoy went 35 of 44 and outplayed Seattle's Russell Wilson, who made his first home start since undergoing finger surgery. McCoy threw touchdown passes of 1 and 2 yards to Zach Ertz in the first half, got a bit of luck in the third quarter when a potential interception was overturned on replay, and had his first 300-yard passing game since 2014.

Washington 27, Panthers 21

In Charlotte, N.C., Taylor Heinicke threw for 206 yards and three touchdowns against the league's top-ranked pass defense, and Washington beat Carolina in Cam Newton's return to Bank of America Stadium.

Terry McLaurin had five catches for 103 yards and a touchdown for Washington (4-6) and former Panthers coach Ron Rivera, who won in his return to Carolina.

Newton, making his first start since signing a one-year contract to return to the Panthers, threw for 189 yards and two touchdowns and ran for a 24-yard score. But Newton's final two potential game-winning drives ended when the Panthers turned the ball over on downs. Daron Payne and James Smith-Williams sacked Newton with 1:11 left to seal the game.

Eagles 40, Saints 29

In Philadelphia, Jalen Hurts ran for three touchdowns, Darius Slay returned an interception for a score and Philadelphia beat New Orleans.

The Eagles (5-6) have won two in a row for the first time this season and rookie coach Nick Sirianni earned his first victory at home in five tries.

The Saints (5-5) dropped their third straight since losing quarterback Jameis Winston to a season-ending ACL injury. Trevor Siemian threw three touchdown passes and two picks and ran for a score without several missing starters around him.

The Eagles led 20-7 with under a minute left in the second quarter when Slay stepped in front of Siemian's pass intended for Deonte Harris and returned it 51 yards for his third TD in four games.

Browns 13, Lions 10

In Cleveland, Nick Chubb caught a touchdown pass and ran for 130 yards as Cleveland Browns held on to avoid a season-wrecking upset and keep Detroit winless.

Chubb returned to Cleveland's lineup after a one-game absence due to COVID-19. He caught a 5-yard TD pass from Baker Mayfield and then helped the Browns (6-5) run out the clock. Chubb gained 36 yards on the final drive.

Wide receiver Jarvis Landry ran for a score as the Browns bounced back after being blown out last week at New England.

Bengals 32, Raiders 13

In Las Vegas, Joe Mixon rushed for 123 yards and scored two touchdowns and Cincinnati beat Las Vegas.

The well-rested Bengals (6-4) came out of their bye week and snapped a two-game skid to climb back into the AFC North race, while the Raiders (5-5) lost their third straight since their bye.

Joe Burrow was 20 of 29 for 148 yards and a touchdown pass to Ja'Marr Chase for Cincinnati. Chase leads all rookies with eight touchdowns this season.

Bengals kicker Evan McPherson became the 13th player with three field goals of 50 yards or more in a game. McPherson was perfect on four field-goal attempts.

49ers 30, Jaguars 3

In Jacksonville, Fla., Jimmy Garoppolo threw two touchdown passes for the third consecutive week and San Francisco dominated Jacksonville for its third win in four games.

Coming off their best game of the season—a 31-10 stunner against the Los Angeles Rams on Monday night—the 49ers (5-5) traveled cross-country on a short week and looked every bit like a playoff contender for the second time in six days.

They scored on their first five possessions, including opening the game with a 20-play field-goal drive that took more than 13 minutes, and set the tone for what would be another long day for the Jaguars (2-8).

Dolphins 24, Jets 17

In East Rutherford, N.J., Tua Tagovailoa threw a go-ahead 5-yard touchdown pass to Myles Gaskin early in the fourth quarter and Miami hung on to beat New York for its third straight victory.

A week after an impressive win over Baltimore, the Dolphins (4-7) overcame some penalties—and the Jets had some sloppy plays of their own—to get their first three-game winning streak since winning five in a row in the middle of last season.

With the game tied at 14, Tagovailoa was facing heavy pressure when he got a throw off to Gaskin, who held onto the ball to put the Dolphins ahead 21-14 with 10:15 left despite getting hit by both C.J. Mosley and Elijah Riley in the end zone.

The Dolphins took a 24-14 lead with 1:57 remaining on Jason Sanders' 24-yard field goal.

Chargers 41, Steelers

In Inglewood, Calif., Justin Herbert threw a 53-yard touchdown pass to Mike Williams with 2:17 remaining and the Los Angeles Chargers held off the Pittsburgh Steelers 41-37 on Sunday night.

Los Angeles (6-4) had a 27-10 lead going into the fourth quarter before the Steelers (5-4-1) rallied to take a 37-34 lead on Chris Boswell's 45-yard field goal with 3:24 left. Los Angeles took over at the 25 and scored four plays later when Williams was wide open and went untouched up the left sideline.

Herbert was 30 of 41 for 382 yards and three touchdowns. He had 90 yards rushing, which is the most by a Chargers quarterback in a game. Keenan Allen had nine receptions for 112 yards, and Williams had 97 yards on five catches.

Austin Ekeler scored a career-high four touchdowns. Ekeler, who had 115 scrimmage yards (65 receiving, 50 rushing), is the ninth player in the Super Bowl era with at least two rushing and two receiving scores in a game.

James ejected after bloodying Stewart, Lakers beat Pistons

DETROIT (AP)— LeBron James was ejected for drawing blood from Isaiah Stewart's face, sending the superstar to the locker room early in the third quarter and leaving his teammates to pick up the slack.

Anthony Davis and Russell Westbrook did that in a big way.

Davis had 30 points, 10 rebounds and two big blocked shots late on rookie Cade Cunningham. Westbrook contributed 26 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds, leading the Los Angeles Lakers to a 121-116 comeback victory over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday night.

"Everybody's level went up when LB came out," Davis said.

The 20-year-old Cunningham, the No. 1 overall pick in the draft, had 13 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists to become the youngest player in franchise history with a triple-double.

James' Flagrant 2 foul ended his night after his left elbow and hand appeared to make contact with Stewart's face when they were tangled up while boxing out for a rebound.

Detroit's center, who was called for a foul before James hit him, had to be held back more than once to keep him separated from the NBA superstar and was also ejected.

"I don't think he should be facing anything from the league," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "He didn't get off the floor in time, and the league will have to decide about that, and I thought that was why he was ejected from the game. "

Westbrook was assessed a technical after the officials reviewed the play and the fallout from it, determining he was an "escalator," while there was pushing, shoving and trash talking.

All parties were relieved that an all-out melee wasn't witnessed as it was on Nov. 19, 2004, when the Pistons and Indiana Pacers had a brawl that spilled into the stands.

Davis praised players, coaches and security for keeping the peace.

"Everybody did a great job trying to deescalate the situation," he said. "You never want it to get to that point like 17 years ago."

After calm was restored on Sunday night, Detroit closed the third quarter strong and led 99-84 entering the fourth.

"Up and until that point, we're still trying to figure each other out," Los Angeles coach Frank Vogel said.

Westbrook and Davis both scored in double figures in the final quarter, leading a rally that gave the Lakers a win to reach .500 this season.

Detroit Pistons center Isaiah Stewart (28) is held back after a foul during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Los Angeles Lakers, Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021, in Detroit. AP

Detroit had the ball with 5.9 seconds left with the chance to potentially tie the game, but Hamidou Diallo turned the ball over and Davis made free throws to seal the victory.

"We had 27 assists going into the fourth quarter, which put us in a position to win, but we stopped moving the ball," Casey said. "We didn't have a single assist in the fourth quarter."

James had 10 points and five assists in his second game back in the lineup. After missing eight games with an abdominal strain, he played Friday night in a 130-108 loss at Boston.

"Everyone in the league knows LeBron isn't a dirty guy," Davis said. "As soon as he did it, he looked back and told him, 'My bad.'"

Kings fire coach Luke Walton after 6-11 start to 3rd season

By JOSH DUBOW
AP SPORTS WRITER

The Sacramento Kings fired coach Luke Walton on Sunday after getting off to a disappointing start in his third season in charge.

Walton was informed of the decision a day after a 123-105 home loss to Utah that dropped the Kings to 6-11 on the season after their seventh loss in eight games.

"We all know all of us have to be better, especially over the last two weeks," general manager Monte McNair said. "We're not meeting expectations. That's not just on Luke. That's on me, the rest of our coaches and players. Everyone acknowledges that."

Walton had a 68-93 record in two-plus seasons as coach, failing to get Sacramento back to the playoffs for the first time since the 2005-06 season.

ESPN first reported the firing.

Associate coach Alvin Gentry takes over on an interim basis. Gentry most recently served as head coach for the New Orleans Pelicans (2015-20). He has also had head coaching stops with Miami, Detroit, the Clippers and Phoenix. He has a career record of 510-595.

The Kings ranked near the bottom of the league in several defensive statistics under Walton's leadership, including scoring and shooting percentage.

Sacramento Kings head coach Luke Walton, center, yells to his team's defense during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game against the Toronto Raptors in Sacramento, Calif., Friday, Nov. 19, 2021. AP

Sacramento has tried to build a core around recent lottery picks such as De'Aaron Fox, Tyrese Haliburton and Davion Mitchell.

"I think we have the talent," McNair said. "We've shown that we can do that. We're going to get back to that and Alvin will be the guy to lead us there."

But the biggest mistake came the year before Walton arrived when the Kings took Marvin Bagley III second overall, ahead of both Luka Doncic and Trae Young. Bagley has played in only four games this season as he has fallen out of favor.

The Kings have been at the bottom of the league for years, with their current 15-year stretch without a playoff berth tied for the longest in NBA history with the Clippers franchise, which missed the playoffs from 1977-91 while playing in Buffalo, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Walton posted 31-41 records in each of his first two seasons.

The situation in Sacramento has been so bad that Walton's .422 winning percentage with the team is the second best of the 18 coaches since the franchise moved to California in 1985.

Rick Adelman had a mark of .633 and led the Kings to the playoffs and a winning record in all eight seasons in charge. Sacramento hasn't had a winning record in a season with any other coach since leaving Kansas City.

Suns 126, Nuggets 97

In Phoenix, Cam Johnson scored a career-high 22 points, Deandre Ayton added 21 and fast-starting Phoenix beat Denver for its 12th straight victory.

The Suns scored 48 points in the first quarter for a 20-point lead, shooting 17 of 22 (77.3%) from the field, including 7 of 8 from 3-point range.

Johnson, Devin Booker and Jae Crowder all hit two 3-pointers during the early run. The Suns haven't lost since Oct. 27 against Sacramento when Harrison Barnes made a 3-pointer at the buzzer. It's the longest winning streak for the franchise since they won 17 straight during the 2006-07 season.

Denver star forward Nikola Jokic missed his second straight game with a sprained right wrist. The Nuggets have lost four straight to fall to 9-8.

Warriors 119, Raptors 104

In San Francisco, Jordan Poole had his second straight 30-point performance with 33, Andrew Wiggins added 32 points and seven rebounds and NBA-leading Golden State beat Toronto to improve to 15-2.

Poole shot 10 for 13 and made eight 3-pointers. Stephen Curry had 12 points and eight assists after sitting out at Detroit on Friday night to rest his sore hip.

Pascal Siakam scored 21 points for Toronto.

Clippers 97, Mavericks 91

In Los Angeles, Paul George scored 12 of his 29 points in the third quarter and Los Angeles beat Dallas to end a two-game skid.

Reggie Jackson scored eight of his 23 points in the third, when the Clippers turned a one-point deficit into a nine-point lead.

Kristaps Porzingis had 25 points and eight rebounds for Dallas. With Luka Doncic out with a sprained left knee and ankle, the Mavericks have dropped three straight — the first two in Phoenix — to open a four-game trip.

Bulls 109, Knicks 103

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points, Zach LaVine added 21 and Chicago rallied in the fourth quarter to beat New York.

Coby White scored 10 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter to help Chicago win its second straight and fourth in five games.

Julius Randle had 34 points on 13-for-18 shooting for New York.

Turkey Trot is going virtual for 2nd straight year

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The 2021 Turkey Trot has been cancelled and in its place is the 2021 Northern Marianas Athletics Mt. Tapochao Virtual Run.

NMA secretary general Robin Sapong said they had to cancel the Turkey Trot for a second straight year due to the recent rise of positive cases of COVID-19 in the community.

"Safety and the well-being of our runners and volunteers is our priority. With the current community surge we decided to be cautious as we still have uncertainty on the current situation," he said.

The Mt. Tapochao Turkey Trot is one of NMA's longest running events but this year the federation will still be holding albeit with social distance protocols in place.

"It's more similar to a hybrid event on a traditional race day. We will set up the course for traffic safety, but runners will do their part in ensuring following race guidelines. Overall, all of us truly miss face-to-face races and we certainly prefer to host face-to-face events in a safe environment," said Sapong.

Under the guidelines for the 2021 Northern Marianas Athletics Mt. Tapochao Virtual Race, runners/walkers must complete the course on their own in a single run. All participants must follow all COVID-19 social distancing rules and comply with all local, state, and federal mandates.

Runners under 18 years old, must obtain parental/guardian approval to participate, according to Sapong.

The official race course is from Lower Base to Mt. Tapochao and results must be posted via Runkeeper app or GPD tracking site. Event duration is from Nov. 25 to Nov. 27, 2021. Results needs to be posted by noon of Saturday, Nov. 27, 2021.

Sapong also added that on Thanksgiving Day on Nov. 25, Thursday, the actual course will be marked with cones from 6am to 8am along with an aid station that NMA will set up at a designated point for social distancing hydration.

NMA will be giving away medals and frozen turkey for the Top 3 overall in the male and female divisions.

All registered finisher will also be entered in a raffle drawing after the race. Winners will be announced on social media pages on Nov. 29.

Participants are also encouraged to submit their race photo for a chance to win the favorite event photo award.

Last year, Edward Dela Cruz Jr. won his debut in the 36th Mt. Tapochao Turkey Trot Run, while Kaithyn Chavez recorded her best time doing the virtual race.

Dela Cruz took on the 4.2-mile course with a group of friends and timed in at 46:47 to notch the top honors in the men's division.

Chavez had the fastest time last year with her 45:11 that broke her previous best mark of 59:15 when she ruled the girls U12 category in 2018.

To register for the 2021 Northern Marianas Athletics Mt. Tapochao Virtual Run, click on https://raceroster.com/events/2021/49620/2021-northern-marianas-athletics-mt-tapochao-virtual-run?fbclid=IwAR3jP40suR4UpN7gk2YsVzLLStzR7EIlZmIG6gsxobJW3EnQy1_p9vx9XoQ.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Brooklyn	12	5	.706	–
New York	9	8	.529	3
Boston	9	8	.529	3
Philadelphia	9	8	.529	3
Toronto	8	10	.444	4½

Southeast Division

Washington	11	5	.688	–
Miami	11	6	.647	½
Charlotte	10	8	.556	2
Atlanta	8	9	.471	3½
Orlando	4	13	.235	7½

Central Division

Chicago	12	5	.706	–
Cleveland	9	8	.529	3
Milwaukee	9	8	.529	3
Indiana	7	11	.389	5½
Detroit	4	12	.250	7½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	9	7	.563	–
Memphis	8	8	.500	1
San Antonio	4	11	.267	4½
New Orleans	3	15	.167	7
Houston	1	15	.063	8

Northwest Division

Utah	11	5	.688	–
Denver	9	8	.529	2½
Portland	9	8	.529	2½
Minnesota	7	9	.438	4
Oklahoma City	6	10	.375	5

Pacific Division

Golden State	15	2	.882	–
Phoenix	13	3	.813	1½
L.A. Clippers	10	7	.588	5
L.A. Lakers	9	9	.500	6½
Sacramento	6	11	.353	9

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	7	4	0	.636	300	177
Buffalo	6	4	0	.600	295	176
Miami	4	7	0	.364	201	269
N.Y. Jets	2	8	0	.200	178	320

South

Tennessee	8	3	0	.727	291	254
Indianapolis	6	5	0	.545	309	245
Houston	2	8	0	.200	150	271
Jacksonville	2	8	0	.200	159	262

North

Baltimore	7	3	0	.700	247	230
Cincinnati	6	4	0	.600	268	216
Pittsburgh	5	4	1	.550	214	226
Cleveland	6	5	0	.545	244	251

West

Kansas City	7	4	0	.636	281	250
L.A. Chargers	6	4	0	.600	260	265
Denver	5	5	0	.500	200	183
Las Vegas	5	5	0	.500	223	262

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

Dallas	7	3	0	.700	293	214
Philadelphia	5	6	0	.455	297	260
Washington	4	6	0	.400	212	267
N.Y. Giants	3	6	0	.333	179	216

South

Tampa Bay	6	3	0	.667	279	212
New Orleans	5	5	0	.500	251	218
Carolina	5	6	0	.455	226	220
Atlanta	4	6	0	.400	178	288

North

Green Bay	8	3	0	.727	247	214
Minnesota	5	5	0	.500	255	242
Chicago	3	7	0	.300	163	240
Detroit	0	9	1	.050	160	273

West

Arizona	9	2	0	.818	310	202
L.A. Rams	7	3	0	.700	271	227
San Francisco	5	5	0	.500	246	222
Seattle	3	7	0	.300	194	209

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PERSONAL

From Page 20

On a funny side note, Guerrero revealed that the first thing he did before taking the call with the two bidding companies for the track and field was go to the Mini Games website so he could see the countdown clock and sure enough it read "211" days last Thursday (206 days as of today).

As per the GAR's timeline, he noted that the bids for the Ada Gym lower roof repairs, HVAC system installation, sport court flooring, and window replacement as well as the track's lighting and resurfacing were all completed last Nov. 18, 201.

While the bids for the baseball field demolition and press box and field repairs as well as the rest of the repairs of the Ada Gym are expected to be completed by Dec. 15, 2021.

Bids to be completed by Dec. 31, 2021 include the baseball field bleachers, scoreboard, and backstop and the bleachers and grandstand for the track and field.

As for the schedule of completion, Guerrero said lower roof repairs and windows replacement for the Ada Gym and baseball field demolition and press box and field repairs are expected to be done in 30 days or by Feb. 1, 2022.

The Ada Gym's sport court flooring will need a little more time to be finished with March 15, 2022 as the expected date of completion, while the track and field's lighting is expected to be up and running by April 1, 2022.

A couple of weeks after the lights go up, the resurfacing of the track is expected to be completed by April 15, 2022, while GAR is looking at May 1, 2022 as the completion dates for the installation of the HVAC system and other repairs at the Ada Gym as well as the bleachers and grandstand for the track and field facility.

Hirsh prefaced his question to Guerrero by saying that many of the nine sports federations involved in the Mini Games are waiting with baited breath as to when the sports facilities will be completed.

"We're really in the 11th hour now in term of getting repairs done and I think we're all collectively a little nervous with COVID-19 and all the uncertainty right now about the work to be completed," he said.

Northern Marianas Pacific Games Organizing Committee CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta echoed Hirsh when he said they are basically entering crunch time with regards to the CNMI hosting of the Mini Games.

"We have about six months or about four months—counting holidays and June and May for that matter—before the start of the Mini Games," he said. Hirsh also asked the GAR if there's some sort of safeguards in the contracts being signed that would guarantee the completion of the sports facilities on the promised deadlines.

"Is there a way to put a provision in these contracts that work must be completed by this date? So if you have to work seven days a week, 18-24 hours a day on three shifts to get this done, it will be done by this date. Because otherwise I'm just worried that these dates are gonna just slip and they can't slip. Starting June 1st there will be delegations coming from all over Oceania here and you know that," he said.

NMSA president Jerry Tan thanked Guerrero for providing NMSA and the Mini Games organizing committee an update on the bidding and completion dates of the sports facilities. He, however, reached out to the nine sports federations taking part in the Mini Game to be proactive to make sure the timelines and the correct repairs are followed.

"I think there's more questions… maybe Jay Santos [Saipan Baseball League president] has some questions for baseball. The same goes for tennis and other sports…we shouldn't be bothering Patrick every day. That's not his job. We need someone else so when baseball wants to come in for an hour and sit down 1-on-1 and talk about baseball, talk about the Rota Roundhouse, talk about tennis, we can do it. Today we probably got a good general update but I think this is not really the right time and day to talk about all nine the sports at the same time," he said.

Tan went on to encourage the nine sports to coordinate with Babauta and sit down with either Guerrero or his designate on the completion timelines and raise questions now.

"It might be already too late but at least it's better to talk now than later…the earlier we get it done the earlier our athletes can be training on the new court, the new surface, the new baseball field. That's the homecourt advantage that we always want to have."

JEFF

From Page 20

"Playing sports that's the goal, right? Every time you would play your best and I think I played my best and then it happened," she said.

Tan echoed Race's sentiments about it being a long time since adult tennis players competed in a tournament.

"Two years of not been playing a tournament is really hard. You feel rusty in a way mentally and physically. Nothing comes easy. Just prepare mentally and physically. I'm pretty fit too because I do run three times a week. I'm so used to running as I've been doing it for almost 15 years."

When asked how she was able to balance organizing the tournament and playing at the same time, Tan said "I just pushed through and I always love practice anyway."

Tan wasn't done yet as she later teamed up with Patrick Vincent Aquino to win the mixed doubles 4.0. The pair took the championship after beating Dunlop and George Poquiz, 6-0, 6-4.

Aquino said he's very happy with the doubles win with Tan, adding that it's their second mixed doubles championship after also combining last May to win the same division in the 2021 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament.

"We complement each other. Lydia is very good on the defense and at the net. I also believe I'm more effective on the attack and back side of the court," he said.

Aquino, who used to play college tennis in his native Philippines, said their key to being a potent team is communication.

"We always strategize before the match and during the game."

Tan and Aquino advanced to the finals after disposing of top seed Irin Chung and Wataru Kadokura, 6-3, 6-1. They defeated Martin and Sarka Jambor, 6-3, 6-2, in the first round.

Dunlop and Poquiz, the second seeds, had an easier route to the championship round as they won a walkover against Aguidave Jones and Gillan Mae Lucera in the semis. They got a bye in the opening round.

In the mixed doubles 3.0, Derek and Elizabeth Culp took the championship after defeating Yutaka Kadokura and Lina Tsukagoshi in the finals, 6-4,6-2. The Culps booked the finals ticket after hurdling Dave Guerrero and Michelle Park, 6-1, 6-1, and Richard Sikkel and Thu Tran, 6-0-6-2, in the top draw.

Kadokura and Tsukagoshi topped the bottom draw after brushing off Jenna Kong and Jean Pierre Nogues, 6-1, 7-5, in the first round then outlasting Edwin Simbulan and Karen Jones, 3-6, 6-4, 0-7, in the semifinals.

The results of the rest of the divisions of the 2021 TanHoldings Tennis Classic will be reported in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

FALL

From Page 20

Following the announcement, schools went back to virtual classes and until now the Public School System has yet to have face-to-face sessions, while some private schools resumed theirs. The NMIFA, on the other hand, last played matches in the U6, U8, U10, U12, and U15 divisions of the youth league last Oct. 23 before making the final decision to scrap the season.

With the unexpected cancelation of the fall competition, the NMIFA said it is considering hosting a tournament next month if the conditions will allow.

Before calling off the season, the 2021 NMIFA Youth Fall League was able to hold games for five weekends. In the co-ed U12 competition, Paire was unbeaten in four games to lead the seven-team field. MP United Pink had a 3-1-1 win-draw-loss record for second place and was followed by MP United Blue (2-1-1), Kanoa-1 (2-0-2), Matansa (2-0-2), TanHoldings (1-0-3), and Kanoa-2 (0-0-5).

In the girls division, TanHoldings was also unscathed with its 5-0-0 mark for the top spot, ahead of Southern United (4-0-1), Kanoa (3-0-2), MP United (2-0-3), Paire (1-0-4), and Shirley's (0-0-5). TanHoldings led in the boys U15 division too with its perfect 5-0-0, and was followed by MP United (4-0-1), Kanoa (3-0-2), Matansa (2-0-3), Paire (1-0-4), and Shirley's (0-0-5).

With the 2021 NMIFA Youth Fall League now canceled, the association is left with the Marianas Soccer League Fall Season 2021 and the Dove Women's Fall League 2021. The two competitions were suspended last Oct. 23 and 24 before the MSL (MSL Cup and Hafa Adai Cup) resumed last No. 4 and the Dove games returned to the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Wednesday.

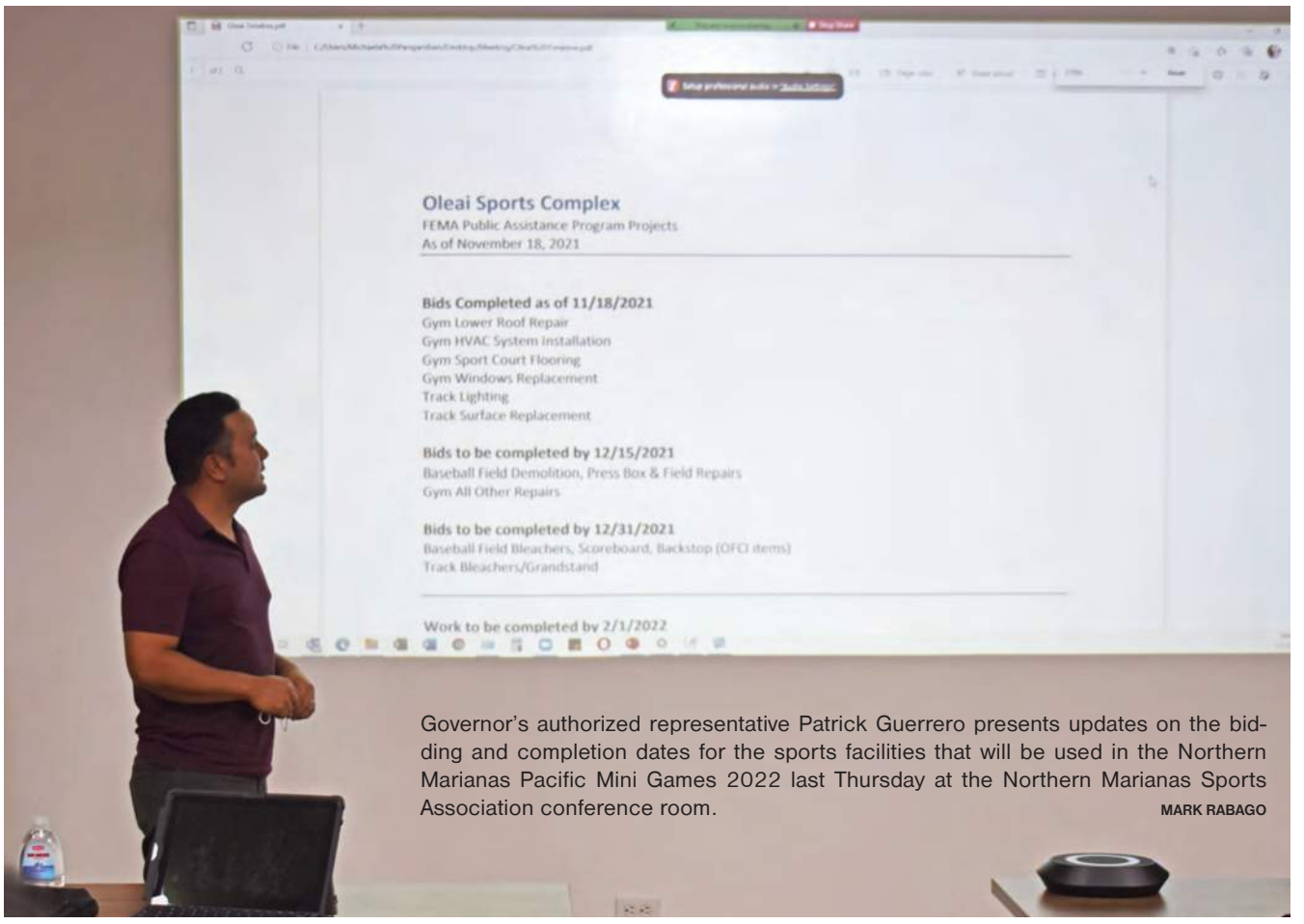
Vikings keep Rodgers off field late, nip Packers, 34-31 PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Turkey Trot is going virtual for 2nd straight year PAGE 19

GAR PRESENTS COMPLETION DATES OF MINI GAMES FACILITIES

'Personal goal to make sure these all happen'


Oleai Sports Complex
FEMA Public Assistance Program Projects
As of November 18, 2021
Bids Completed as of 11/18/2021
Gym Lower Roof Repair
Gym HVAC System Installation
Gym Sport Court Flooring
Gym Windows Replacement
Track Lighting
Track Surface Replacement
Bids to be completed by 12/15/2021
Baseball Field Demolition, Press Box & Field Repairs
Gym All Other Repairs
Bids to be completed by 12/31/2021
Baseball Field Bleachers, Scoreboard, Backstop (OFC) items)
Track Bleachers/Grandstand
Work to be completed by 2/1/2022

Governor's authorized representative Patrick Guerrero presents updates on the bidding and completion dates for the sports facilities that will be used in the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last Thursday at the Northern Marianas Sports Association conference room. MARK RABAGO

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Governor's authorized representative Patrick Guerrero last Friday gave a timeline as to when repairs to sports facilities will be done and also said he's made it his personal goal that repairs to the Oleai track and field, Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium, and the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field, among others, will be completed ahead of the start of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022.

"I'm making it my personal goal to make sure all these happen," he responded after Northern Marianas Sports Association treasurer John Hirsh said that the Mini Games organizing committee is already in the 11th hour of preparations for the quadrennial event the CNMI will be hosting the first time ever from June 17-25, 2022.

Guerrero added that he's quite cognizant that time is of the essence when it comes to the completion of the sports facilities.

"That's why we've asked the two bidders for the track and field if they're sure if they can do it within the 120 days," he said.

See PERSONAL on Page 19

Jeff, Lydia top mixed doubles 50

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

From left, Jeff Race and Lydia Tan and Roy Pangelinan and Marivic Dunlop pose with Northern Marianas Sports Association executive director Carline Sablan during the 2021 TanHoldings Tennis Classic award banquet last Sunday at the American Memorial Park. ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Last weekend proved that you can organize a tournament and win it too after Jeff Race and Lydia Tan ruled the 50-and-over mixed doubles of the 2021 TanHoldings Tennis Classic at the American Memorial Park.

Race, longtime president of the Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Federation, and Tan, who is the tournament director, defeated Roy Pangelinan and Marivic Dunlop in the finals, 6-2, 6-2.

Race quickly attributed the victory in the 50-and-over mixed doubles to the ever-energetic Tan.

"Good, it was a fun game. My partner played good and she's been playing really hard in doubles. She's training every night and we do all kinds of doubles drills. She played really good. Lydia led us to the win," he said.

The many-time CNMI national tennis coach and CNMI Sports Hall of Fame inductee said it was great to be playing in a tournament after COVID-19 essentially wiped out adult tennis in the sports calendar.

"I think we did have a lot of junior tournaments at the beginning of the year and we haven't had an adult tournament for quite a while. So I think there's a lot of adults that are kind of dusting off their tournament games including me. I was a little bit tight when we started yesterday in the men's open doubles."

Tan said she's elated with her and Race's triumph in the 50-and-over mixed doubles, but added that winning is not always the end-all of participating in sports.

See JEFF on Page 19

Paire Football Club's Phoenix Gross deflects the ball for a defensive stop during their game against MP United FC in the girls U15 division of the 2021 NMIFA Youth Fall League last month at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fall youth league season called off

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Northern Mariana Islands Football Association has cancelled the 2021 NMIFA Youth Fall League as safety precaution against the COVID-19 cases in the community.

"After some careful consideration, we regret to inform you that the NMIFA Youth Subcommittee has decided to formally cancel the NMIFA 2021 Fall Youth League. It is unfortunate, but the safety of our children remains the top priority of our association," the NMIFA said in an official statement.

Initially, the league suspended games in the fall season after the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force announced the presence of COVID-19 cases in the community late last month.

See FALL on Page 19